



Renfrew County District School Board Special Education Department

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PARENTS AS PARTNERS

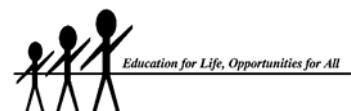
A PARENT GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Revised: June 2010

Notes:

This parents' guide is available in Braille, large print, or audio-cassette format. Please contact the board at the address and telephone number shown on the last page of this guide for receipt of these specially formatted materials.

When used in this guide, the word "parent" includes guardian.



Definitions

Exceptional Pupil:

"Means 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 by a committee."

Section 1, Education Act, 1997

Committee (Identification, Placement and Review Committee – I.P.R.C.):

"Means a Special Education Identification, Placement, and Review Committee established by the Board". The main purpose of the committee is to determine whether or not the pupil is exceptional according to standards set by the Board and if exceptional, to recommend and review placements.

Ontario Regulation 181/98, Education Act 1998

Case Conference:

A meeting held to discuss the academic progress, programming needs, health needs and other support required by the student. The participants can be made up of staff, outside agencies, parents, and board resource staff. Information gathered at the case conference may be used to support I.P.R.C. decisions. A case conference can be held at any time throughout the school year but typically is held prior to or following an I.P.R.C. meeting.

Shared Solutions

A guide published by the provincial Ministry of Education that can be used to prevent or resolve conflicts relating to program or service delivery for students with special needs.

Special Education Programs:

"Means, in respect of an exceptional pupil, an educational program that is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation and that includes a plan containing specific objectives and an outline of educational services that meets the needs of the exceptional pupil".

Education Act 1997

Special Education Services:

"Means, facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment necessary for developing and implementing a Special Education Program."

Education Act 1997

Placements:

"A pupil's needs are determined in the assessment process and can usually be met with minor changes in the amount and kind of support provided at school. Some pupils require a different approach, either

- ◆ regular class with Special Education support;
- ◆ regular class with short-term withdrawal from the classroom for additional support; or
- ◆ special class placement.

Assessments:

"Educational Assessments" determine the student's academic achievement levels.

"Psycho-educational Assessments" seek to determine intellectual functioning, specific strengths and weaknesses in cognitive functioning, academic strengths and difficulties, learning style, and problem solving approaches.

"Psychological Assessments" examine social and emotional development.

"Speech Language Assessments" analyze speech and language development to determine areas of strength and difficulty.

"Behavioural Assessment" focuses on social and developmental history and present day functioning level.

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What Is Special Education?

Children have different skills, talents, strengths, and weaknesses. Some children need special help or assistance within the school environment to achieve their academic potential.

To make the most of a child's abilities, different learning strategies and methods need to be used with some children.

Special Education refers to educational programs and services that meet the needs of these exceptional children. These programs and services are regularly reviewed and modified as necessary to ensure that the child continues to have success.

Some examples include:

- ◆ accommodations and/or modifications to a pupil's regular classroom program by a Special Education Resource Teacher;
- ◆ withdrawal for part of the school day to work with a Special Education Resource Teacher;
- ◆ placement in a Special Education class; or
- ◆ counselling, social skill groups provided by a School Support Counsellor.

The Education Act requires school Boards to provide programs and services for pupils who are determined "*exceptional*" as defined by the Ministry of Education.

Parents, Teachers, Principal Concerns

1. How Do I Know My Child Has A Special Need?

- Your child is experiencing prolonged difficulty coping with the routines or relationships with others at the school.
- Your child's schoolwork does not match ability level.
- Your child's educational needs cannot be met within the regular curriculum.

2. How Do I Get Assistance For My Child?

- You, the parent or guardian, can ask for help directly from the teacher and/or the school principal.
- You may agree to have assessments done with your written consent.

Obtain information brochures from your school on specific programs or exceptionalities.

In-School Assessments & Curriculum Modifications

1. What Types Of Assessments Can The School Do For My Child?

- Educational

- Psycho-educational
- Psychological
- Behavioural
- Speech & Language

On the basis of written parental consent, the educational assessment may include standardized achievement tests, given by a Special Education teacher as well as a review of your child's daily work and academic records.

If necessary, a psycho-educational assessment will include an individual intellectual assessment. Additional assessments, such as hearing and/or medical, psychological, behavioural, and Speech Language may be requested to assist in determining your child's strengths and learning needs.

2. What Do Assessments Involve?

- a) School personnel meet with you to discuss your child's learning needs.
- b) Special Education staff within each school will provide an initial screening of your child before a referral is made for an individual consultation.
- c) If school administration believes that further investigation of your child's educational needs is necessary, you will be invited to meet with the principal to discuss your child's educational needs. At this time, if you agree, you will be asked to sign a form allowing personnel from the Special Education Department to consult with school staff to determine whether or not an individual psycho-educational assessment is required.
- d) If an assessment is completed, the principal will invite you to review the results with the in-school team at a case conference.

Referral to an Identification, Placement and Review Committee

For some children and their parents, one additional formal process may be necessary.

The assessments may indicate that your child's learning needs require further consideration by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee.

Identification, Placement & Review Committee (I.P.R.C.)

1. How Is My Child Brought To The Attention Of The I.P.R.C.?

The principal of your child's school:

- must request an I.P.R.C. meeting for your child, upon receiving your written request;
- may, with written notice to you, refer your child to an I.P.R.C. when the principal and the child's teacher or teachers believe that your child may benefit from a special education program or service.

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

2. What Does The I.P.R.C. Do?

All Identification, Placement, and Review Committees have the following role:

- a) To determine whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional;
- b) To identify the areas of your child's exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education;
- c) To review the student's strengths and needs;
- d) To decide an appropriate placement for your child
 - regular class program
 - support from the School Support Counsellor
 - speech/language program
 - resource withdrawal program
 - special class program part time
 - special class program more than half-time
 - referral to a provincial school;
- e) To review your child's identification and placement at least once in each school year.

We believe that all the information possible should be made available to the Identification, Placement and Review Committee in order to determine your child's needs. At the I.P.R.C., the chair introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting. The I.P.R.C. will review all available information about your child.

They will:

- consider an educational assessment of your child;
- consider, subject to 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;
- consider any information that you submit about your child or that your child submits if he or she is 16 years of age or older;
- interview your child, with your consent if your child is less than 16 years of age.

Following the discussion, after all the information has been presented and considered, the committee will make its decision.

3. What Will The I.P.R.C. Consider In Making Its Placement Decision?

Before the I.P.R.C. considers 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.

The I.P.R.C. may, if satisfied that placement in a regular class will meet your child's needs and that this decision is consistent with your preferences, recommend placement in the 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.

4. What Will The I.P.R.C.'s Written Statement Of Decision Include?

The I.P.R.C.'s written statement of decision will state:

- whether or not the I.P.R.C. has identified your child as exceptional;
- where the I.P.R.C. has identified your child as exceptional,
 - the categories and definitions of any exceptionalities identified, as they are defined by the Ministry of Education,
 - the I.P.R.C.'s description of your child's strengths and needs,
 - the I.P.R.C.'s placement decision, and
 - the I.P.R.C.'s recommendations regarding a special education program and/or special education services.

Where the I.P.R.C. has decided that your child should be placed in a special education class, the reasons for this decision must be stated.

5. Who Is An Exceptional Pupil?

There is a broad range of "*exceptionalities*". The Education Act defines an exceptional pupil as "a pupil whose behaviour, 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.

Before your child is considered an "*exceptional*" pupil, a decision must be made by a committee known as the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (I.P.R.C.). You, as a parent or guardian, will be invited to attend and actively take part in the meeting of the I.P.R.C.

6. Who Are The Members Of The I.P.R.C.?

Regulation 181/98 requires that all School Boards set up I.P.R.C.s. An I.P.R.C. is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer of the Board.

Within the Renfrew County District School Board, members of the I.P.R.C. include the school principal and two from the following list:

- School Principal(s)
- Vice Principal(s)
- School Superintendent(s)
- Teacher (s)
- Superintendent's Designate
- Special Education Consultant

NOTE: When pupils are transferring between schools within communities, it is the policy of the Board to hold one I.P.R.C. meeting and include I.P.R.C. members of both the sending and receiving school.

7. Can A Parent Participate In An I.P.R.C. Meeting?

Regulation 181/98 entitles parents and pupils 16 years of age or older:

- to be present and participate in all committee decisions about your child; and
- to be present when the committee's identification and placement decision is made.

8. Who Else May Attend An I.P.R.C. Meeting?

- Other resource staff such as your child's teacher, special education staff, Board support staff, or the representative of an agency, who may provide further information or clarification;
- Your representative - that is, a person who may support you or speak on behalf of you or your child; and
- An interpreter, if one is required (e.g. sign language interpreter);
- Special Education Teacher Assistant may attend at the request of the parent(s).

9. Who May Request That Others Attend?

Either you or the principal of your child's school may make a request for attendance of others at the I.P.R.C. meeting.

10. What Information Will Parents Receive About The I.P.R.C. Meeting?

- Parents will receive a letter at least 10 days in advance of the meeting to notify you of the date, time, and place of the meeting, and it will ask you to indicate whether you will attend.
- Before the I.P.R.C. meeting occurs, you will receive a written copy of any information about your child that the chair of the I.P.R.C. has received. This may include the results of assessments.

11. What If Parents Are Unable To Attend The Meeting?

If you are unable to attend the meeting, you may:

- contact the school principal to arrange an alternative date or time; or
- let the school principal know you will not be attending, and as soon as possible after the meeting, the principal will forward to you, for your consideration and signature, the I.P.R.C.'s written statement of decision of identification and placement and any recommendations regarding special education programs and services.

12. What Should A Parent Do If He/She Disagrees With The Decision Of The I.P.R.C.?

If parents do not agree with the identification or placement decision made by the I.P.R.C., they may notify the I.P.R.C. and principal in writing within fifteen days of receiving the written notification of the I.P.R.C. decisions. The I.P.R.C. shall arrange to meet with the parents for this purpose

In the event that a parent remains dissatisfied after a second meeting of the I.P.R.C., they may file a notice of appeal with the Director of the Board within 15 days of receiving written notification from the second meeting. Based on the Shared Solutions document, the protocol would involve a Mediator to assist with providing a solution.

13. Can A Parent Appeal The Decision Of The I.P.R.C.?

A parent may appeal if he/she disagrees with:

- a) the identification of their child as exceptional or as non-exceptional; and/or
- b) the recommended placement of your child.

To appeal an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee decision, a parent must give written notice to the Director of the Renfrew County District School Board within fifteen (15) days of the discussion with the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee. The appeal must indicate whether the disagreement with the I.P.R.C. decision is with the identification, placement, or both; or

A parent may decide to appeal the I.P.R.C. decision without a request for a second meeting. Written notification must be made to the Director of Education within 30 days of receiving the decision of the I.P.R.C.

14. What Happens In The Appeal Process?

The appeal process involves the following steps:

- a) The Board will establish a special education appeal board composed of three persons (one of whom is to be selected by the parent) who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal.
- b) The chair of the appeal board will arrange a meeting no later than 30 days after the chair has been selected.
- c) The appeal board will be provided with the I.P.R.C. information and may interview any persons who may be able to contribute information about the matter under appeal.
- d) The parent and child who is 16 years of age or older are entitled to be present and participate in all discussions.
- e) The appeal board must make its recommendations within 3 days of the meeting ending. It may:
 - agree with the I.P.R.C. and recommend that the decision be implemented; or
 - disagree with the I.P.R.C. and make a recommendation to the board about the pupil's identification, placement, or both.
- f) The appeal board will report its recommendations in writing to the parent and to the School Board stating reasons for its recommendations.
- g) The School Board must decide what action it will take within 30 days of receiving the written report (boards are not required to follow the appeal board recommendation).
- h) A parent may accept the recommendation of the appeal board, or a parent may appeal to a Special Education Tribunal. The parent may request a hearing by writing to the secretary of the Special Education Tribunal.

15. When Is My Child's Placement Reviewed?

The placement of every exceptional pupil is reviewed at least once a year. Parents are invited in writing to attend this review meeting. Your child's placement shall not be changed without you receiving prior notification in writing.

Parent(s) must consent in writing before a change is made in the current placement of the child.

Parent(s) may request a review of the child's Special Education placement at any time after the placement has been in effect for three (3) months by applying in writing to the appropriate principal.

A waiver letter is available to give parents the option to dispense with the annual review for their child. This option cannot be used for two consecutive years concerning the same student. This waiver is an option for the parents of students where no changes are being recommended to either identification or placement. IPRC reviews will continue to be held for all other students, and for students with accommodations who are transitioning between levels, leaving school, or who are new to Renfrew County.

Limitations guiding the waiver letter's use within RCDSB schools:

- This option does not apply to students who are transitioning from grade 8 to grade 9 or from grade 12 to either year 5 of the secondary school program or who are graduating from secondary school

16. What Does A Review I.P.R.C. Consider And Decide?

The review I.P.R.C. considers the same type of information that was originally considered at the initial I.P.R.C.

The I.P.R.C. conducting the review will consider the progress your child has made in relation to his/her I.E.P.

The I.P.R.C. will review the placement and identification decisions and decide whether they should be continued or whether a different decision should now be made.

17. What if I no longer agree with the identification or placement decision of the I.P.R.C.?

Parent may discuss their concern with the principal, resolve the concern and make the appropriate change in placement. Parent(s) may also request in writing that an I.P.R.C. meeting be held after 90 days following the last I.P.R.C.

18. Who can I contact if I have questions about the I.P.R.C. process or decision?

Information is available from the various organizations that advocate for parents. The Retired Teachers of Ontario have developed an I.P.R.C. pamphlet and can provide support or explanations to parents regarding I.P.R.C. meetings.

Programs & Services

1. What Is A Special Education Program?

A special education program is an educational program developed for an exceptional pupil. This program is designed to meet the needs of the exceptional pupil and is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation. This program includes a plan (called an Individual Education Plan or I.E.P.) containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the pupil.

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.

2. What Is An Individual Education Plan?

An Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.) is developed for students that have been identified through an Identification, Placement and Review Committee. It contains information about the following:

- Student's Strengths,
- Learning Style (if known),
- Needs,
- Outline of the special education program and services that will be received (location, type, intensity or frequency of supports),
- Accommodations as required and modified educational expectations or alternate expectations (if appropriate),
- Methods of Student's Progress Review
- Current Achievement Levels,
- Relevant Assessment Data,
- Evaluation of Progress on Expectations,
- For students 14 years and older (except gifted), a plan for transition to appropriate post-secondary school activities, such as work, further education, and community living.

As a parent, you must be consulted on the development of the I.E.P. and you must receive a copy of the completed I.E.P. If you disagree with the information in the I.E.P., you should contact your school's principal to discuss your concerns. The I.E.P. must be developed within 30 school days of your child's placement in the special education program.

Students 16 years and older must be consulted on the development of the I.E.P. and must receive a copy. The student should also sign the I.E.P.

3. What Kinds Of Special Education Placements Are Available?

Special Education Programs include the following:

- Behaviour Programs
- Placement on the caseload of the Speech-Language Pathologist
- Resource Withdrawal Programs
- Itinerant Program for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Itinerant Program for the Blind/Low Vision
- Developmental Programs (*elementary and secondary*)
- Elementary Special Classes (*Learning Disability, Mild Intellectual Disability*)

ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations are available to provide information and support to parents of exceptional children.

Association for Bright Children Ontario

Box 156, Suite 100, 2 Bloor Street West, Toronto ON M4W 2G7

Telephone: 416-925-6136

Web: www.abcontario.ca

Email: abcinfo@abcontario.ca

Autism Society Ontario

1179A King Street West, Suite 004, Toronto, ON M6K 3C5

Telephone: 416-246-9592

Fax: 416-246-9417

Web: www.autismontario.com

E-Mail: mail@autismsociety.on.ca

Canadian Hearing Society

Ottawa Regional Office

2197 Riverside Drive, Suite 502, Ottawa, ON K1H 7X3

Telephone: 613-521-0509 Voice

613-521-0634 TTY - ATS

Fax: 613-521-0838 Fax

Web: www.chs.ca

Email: office@ottawa.chs.ca

Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario

401 Smyth Road, Ottawa, ON K1H 8L1

Telephone: 613-737-7600

Web: www.cheo.on.ca

Community Care Access Centre – Renfrew County

1100 Pembroke Street East, Pembroke, ON K8A 6Y7

Telephone: 613-732-7007 or 1-888-421-2222

Fax: 613-732-2051

Web: www.ccac-ont.ca

Community Living – Upper Ottawa Valley

894 Pembroke Street West, Box 1030, Pembroke, ON K8A 5P8

Telephone: 613-735-0659

Fax: 613-735-1373

Web: www.communitylivingupperottawavalley.ca

Community Living Renfrew County South

In Renfrew: 326 Raglan Street South, Renfrew, ON K7V 1R5

Telephone: 613-432-6763

Fax: 613-432-9465

Web: www.clrcs.com

Council for Exceptional Children (C.E.C.)

Web: www.cecontario.ca

Easter Seals Society

1101 Prince of Wales Drive, Suite 105, Ottawa, ON K2C 3W7

Telephone: 613-226-3051 or 1-800-561-4313

Fax: 613-226-3052

Web: www.easterseals.org

Learning Disability Association Ottawa-Carleton

160 Percy St, Ottawa K1R 6E5

Telephone: 613-567-5864

Fax: 613-567-5979

Web: www.ncf.ca/ldao-c

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (L.D.A.O.)

Suite 1005, 364 Bloor Street East, Box 39, Toronto, ON M4W 3L4

Telephone: 1-416-929-4311

Fax: 1-416-929-3905

Web: www.ldao.ca

Phoenix Centre for Children and Families

130 Pembroke Street West, Suite 100, Pembroke, ON K8A 5M8

Telephone: 613-735-2374 or 1-800-466-1870

Fax: 613-735-2378

Web: www.phoenixpembroke.com

Renfrew County Developmental Services

c/o Family & Children's Services

464 Isabella Street, Pembroke, ON K8A 5T9

Contact: Deborah McGrath, Manager, Developmental Services

Telephone: 613-735-6866 or 1-800-267-5878

Fax: 613-735-3067

Links to these organizations and other resources can be found on Renfrew County District School Board Website www.renfrew.edu.on.ca. Select Special Education from the Departments drop-down menu and click on "Links" on the sidebar.

What Are The Ministry's Provincial And Demonstration Schools?

The Ministry operates Provincial and provincial Demonstration Schools throughout Ontario for deaf, blind, deaf-blind, and severely learning disabled students, as well as those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Residential programs are offered at the schools Monday to Friday, for students in Renfrew County.

Demonstration schools for English-speaking students with severe learning disabilities, including learning disabilities associated with ADHD:

Amethyst School
1090 Highbury Avenue
London, ON N5Y 4V9
Tel: (519) 453-4408
Fax: (519) 453-2160

Sagonaska School
350 Dundas Street West
Belleville ON K8P 1B2
Tel: 613-967-2830
Fax: 613-967-2482

Trillium School
347 Ontario Street S
Milton, ON L9T 3X9
Tel: (905) 878-8428
Fax: (905) 878-7540

Schools for the deaf

The Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf
225 Ontario Street South
Milton, ON L9T 2M5
Tel: (905) 878-2851
Fax: (905) 878-1354

The Robarts School for the Deaf
1090 Highbury Avenue
London, ON N5Y 4V9
Tel: (519) 453-4400
Fax: (519) 453-7943

The Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf
350 Dundas Street West
Belleville, ON K8P 1B2
Tel: 613-967-2823
Fax: 613-967-2857

School for the blind and deaf-blind

W. Ross Macdonald School
350 Brant Avenue
Brantford, ON N3T 3J9
Tel: (519) 759-0730
Fax: (519) 759-4741

French-language school for the deaf and Demonstration School for French-speaking students with severe learning disabilities, including learning disabilities associated with ADHD

Centre Jules-Leger
281 Rue Lanark
Ottawa, ON K1Z 6R8
Tel: 613-761-9300
Fax: 613-761-9301

For further information or answers to inquiries, please contact

YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

or

RENFREW COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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A VIDEO IS AVAILABLE TO ACCOMPANY THIS GUIDE. Please contact your school principal.