

Guide to Special Education for Parents/Guardians



The purpose of this Guide to Special Education for Parents/Guardians is to provide you with information about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), and to set out 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.

If, after reading this guide, you require more information, please see the board contact list at the end of the document.

What is an “IPRC”?

Regulation 181/98 requires that all school boards establish committees for the identification and placement of exceptional students (IPRCs). An IPRC is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer. Members most often include:

1. Principal
2. Teacher(s)
3. Special Education Support Staff and/or others as required

What is the role of the IPRC?

The IPRC will:

- ❖ decide whether or not your child should be identified with an exceptionality;
- ❖ identify the areas of your child’s exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education;

- ❖ decide an appropriate placement for your child. Rainbow District School Board offers a full range of placement options:
 - regular classroom with resource support
 - self-contained special education class
 - self-contained special education school
 - Provincial School placement for students with a learning disability or students who are deaf or blind

Who is identified as an exceptional pupil?

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

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 plan (called an Individual Education Plan or IEP) containing specific goals and an outline of special education services designed for 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 is an IEP?

The IEP must be developed for your child, in consultation with you.

It must include:

- ❖ specific educational expectations;
- ❖ an outline of the special education program and services that will be received;
- ❖ a statement about the methods by which your child's progress will be reviewed;
- ❖ for students 14 years and older (except those identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness), a plan for transition to appropriate postsecondary school activities, such as work, further education, and community living; and
- ❖ all students with an IEP must have a transition plan, regardless of age.

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

How is an IPRC meeting requested?

The principal of your child's school:

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

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 IPRC will meet.

May parents/guardians attend the IPRC meeting?

Regulation 181/98 entitles parents/guardians and pupils 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 else may attend an IPRC meeting?

- ❖ the principal of your child's school;
- ❖ other resource people 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. (You can request the services of a school board interpreter through the principal of your child's school.)

Who may request that others attend?

Either you 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/guardians receive about 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 the meeting 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.

Before the IPRC meeting occurs, you will receive a written copy of any information about your child that the chair of the IPRC has received. This may include the results of assessments or a summary of information.

What if parents/guardians are unable to make the scheduled meeting?

If you are unable to make the scheduled 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 IPRC's written statement of decision noting the decision of identification and placement and any recommendations regarding special education programs and services.

What happens at an IPRC meeting?

- ❖ The chair introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting.
- ❖ The IPRC will review all available information about your child.
- ❖ They 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, with your consent if your child is less than 16 years of age, if they feel it would be useful to do so; and
 - 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.
- ❖ 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:

- ❖ support your child's exceptionality; 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 support your child's exceptionalities 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 and definitions 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 and 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, that you agree with the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC. The statement of decision may be signed at the IPRC meeting or taken home and returned.

If the IPRC has identified your child as an exceptional pupil and you **have agreed** with the IPRC identification and placement decision, the principal of the school at which the special education program is to be provided will initiate the development of 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 within the school year, unless the principal of the school at which the special education program is being provided receives written notice from you, the parent/guardian, 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?

- ❖ The review IPRC considers the same type of information that was originally considered.
- ❖ With your written permission, the IPRC conducting the review will consider the progress your child has made in relation to the IEP.
- ❖ The IPRC will review the placement and identification decisions and decide whether they should be continued or whether a different decision should now be made.

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

- ❖ If you **do not agree** with either the **identification or 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;
 - you may waive the right to a second IPRC.
- ❖ 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 and 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 Secretary of the Rainbow District School Board, 408 Wembley Drive, Sudbury ON P3E 1P2.

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 (one of whom is to be selected by you, the parent/guardian) who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal.
- ❖ 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 he or she has been selected (unless parents/guardians and board both 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/guardian, and your child, if he or she is 16 years old or over, are entitled to be present at, and to participate in, all discussions.
- ❖ The appeal board must make its recommendation within three days of the meeting 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, 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 recommendation.)

- ❖ 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 special education programs and services are provided by the board?

Rainbow District School Board provides special education programs and services for all exceptional students of the board, including assessments, modified curriculum expectations, alternative curriculum expectations, accommodations and/or an adapted environment. Human resource support is also provided.

What organizations are available to assist parents/guardians?

Many parent organizations are available to provide information and support to parents/guardians of exceptional children.

What are the Ministry of Education's provincial and demonstration schools?

The Ministry of Education operates provincial and 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 who live too far from school to travel daily.

Demonstration schools for English-speaking students with ADHD and severe learning disabilities:

❖ Sagonaska Demonstration School

350 Dundas Street West

Belleville, ON K8P 1B2

Telephone: 613-967-2830

❖ Trillium Demonstration School

347 Ontario Street South

Milton, ON L9T 3X9

Telephone: 905-878-2851

❖ Amethyst Demonstration School

1515 Cheapside Street

London, ON N5V 3N9

Telephone: 519-453-4400

Schools for the deaf:

❖ Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf

255 Ontario Street South
Milton, ON L9T 2M5
Telephone: 905-878-2851
TTY: 905-878-7195

❖ Robarts School for the Deaf

1515 Cheapside Street
London, ON N5V 3N9
Telephone and TTY: 519-453-4400

❖ Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf

350 Dundas Street West
Belleville, ON K8P 1B2
Telephone and TTY: 613-967-2823

School for the blind and deaf-blind:

❖ W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind

350 Brant Avenue
Brantford, ON N3T 3J9
Telephone: 519-759-0730
Toll Free: 866-618-9092

Francophone school for the deaf and for those with learning disabilities:

❖ Centre Jules-Léger

281 avenue Lanark

Ottawa, ON K1Z 6R8

Telephone: 613-761-9300

Where can parents/guardians obtain additional information?

Additional information can be obtained by contacting:

❖ Your school principal

OR

❖ Superintendent responsible for Special Education

Rainbow District School Board

408 Wembley Drive, Sudbury ON P3E 1P2

Phone: 705-674-3171, Fax: 705-674-3167

OR

❖ Rainbow District School Board

Special Education Programs and Services

408 Wembley Drive, Sudbury ON P3E 1P2

Phone: 705-674-3171, Fax: 705-523-3314