

***A PARENT'S GUIDE***  
**TO**  
***SPECIAL EDUCATION***



**June 2010**

## **ALGOMA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY**

The Algoma District School Board supports the inclusion and integration of the exceptional student into the regular classroom.

In recognition of the unique qualities and diverse needs of each student, a range of support services and programs are necessary.

The approach to each need will complement and support the vision and goals of the school, family and community.

## **ACCESSING SPECIAL SERVICES FOR YOUR CHILD**

If you have a concern regarding your child's progress within the education system of the Algoma District School Board, here is the most effective procedure to follow:

- 1.** Contact your child's classroom teacher about your concerns. Sharing information and developing a cooperative plan between home and school are invaluable in supporting and encouraging your child. This may be all that is needed to remediate learning difficulties.
- 2.** If it appears that more consultation is required, the teacher will often suggest that the school team meet. This team will include the school Special Education Resource Teacher, others who teach your child and, often, the principal. Strategies are developed at this meeting to find in-school solutions to supporting your child. The Special Education Resource Teacher may do some informal testing to evaluate your child's learning needs. A meeting with you is a part of this strategy. A variety of practical plans will be developed and discussed with you.
- 3.** In more complex situations, the school, through the principal, will consult the Special Education Coordinator assigned to that particular school. The coordinator will assess the situation, offer suggestions and/or recommend further testing or consultations with other members of the board support team or an outside agency. An IEP is just one of the many strategies which may be recommended.
- 4.** If testing is recommended, the appropriate consent forms and consultation will follow. After reviewing the results of testing and consultation, an IEP may be recommended.
- 5.** If it is in accordance with your wishes, and documentation on your child supports the definition or exceptionality, as defined by the Ministry of Education, an IPRC will be arranged through the Special Education Department. After students are identified through the IPRC process, an Individual Education Plan must be prepared in order to match your child's education requirements to the identified needs.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE**

The Education Act requires that school boards provide special education programs and services for their exceptional pupils. The purpose of this parents' guide is to provide you with information about 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.

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

## **THE IDENTIFICATION, PLACEMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE (IPRC)**

Regulation 181/98 requires that all school boards set up IPRCs. An IPRC is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer of the Board.

## **THE ROLE OF THE IPRC**

The IPRC will:

- Decide whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional;
- Identify the areas of your child's exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education and Training;
- Decide an appropriate placement for child, i.e.
  - regular class
  - regular class/withdrawal
  - special class/integration when appropriate
  - special school; and
- review the identification and placement at least once in each school year.

## THE EXCEPTIONAL PUPIL

The Education Act defines an exceptional pupil as “a pupil who’s behavioural, communicational, intellectual, and 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 and Training.**

### ➤ **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, and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:

- a) An inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;
- b) Excessive fears or anxieties;
- c) A tendency to compulsive reaction; or
- d) An inability to learning 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:

- a) Disturbance in:
  - rate of educational development;
  - ability to relate to the environment;
  - mobility;
  - perception, speech and language;
- b) lack of the 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 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:

- a) involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication, and
- b) 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***

A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication, and that is characterized by a condition that:

- a) is NOT primarily the result of:
  - impairment of vision;
  - impairment of hearing;
  - physical disability;
  - developmental disability;
  - primary emotional disturbance;
  - cultural difference; and
- b) results in significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual ability, with deficits in one or more of the following:
  - receptive language (listening, reading);
  - language processing (thinking, conceptualizing, integrating);
  - expressive language (talking, spelling, writing);
  - mathematical computations.
- c) may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as:
  - a perceptual handicap;
  - a brain injury
  - minimal brain dysfunction;\*
  - dyslexia.
  - development aphasia.

***\* A diagnostic category referring to children with average or above average general intelligence with mild to severe learning and/or behavioural difficulties which are due to deviations arising from genetic variations, prenatal brain insults, metabolic imbalances, biochemical irregularities and/or illnesses sustained during years critical for the development and maturation of those parts of the central nervous system having to do with perception, language, inhibition of impulses and motor control.***

➤ **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:

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

***Developmental Disability***

A severe learning disorder characterized by:

- a) an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development;
- b) an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;
- c) a 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**

### ***Multiple Exceptionalities***

A combination of learning and other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities, that is of such a 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.

## **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 objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

## **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.

## **THE IEP (Individual Education Plan)**

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; and
- for students 14 years and older (except those identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness), a plan for transition to appropriate post secondary school activities, such as work, further education, and community living.

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.

## **REQUESTING AN IPRC MEETING**

The principal of your child's school:

- must request an IPRC meeting for your child, upon receiving our 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.

## **WHO MAY ATTEND THE IPRC MEETING?**

Regulation 181/98 entitles parents and pupils 16 years or 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, 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 an interpreter through the principal of your child's school).
- either you or the principal of your child's school may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting.

## **INFORMATION PARENTS 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.

***If parents are unable to attend 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 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.

**IPRC MEETING PROCESS**

- 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 provision 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 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 the IPRC's Written Statement of Decision Includes**

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 and Training;
  - 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.

If you **agree** with the IPRC decision, you will be asked to indicate, by signing your name that you agree with 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 exceptional and you have **agreed** with the IPRC identification and placement decision, 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.

### ***Review of Placement***

A review of 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.

### ***Consideration/Decision of the IPRC Review***

- 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.

### ***Disagreeing with the IPRC Decision***

If you **do not agree** with either the identification or placement decision 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 or appeal with:

***Mr. Mario Turco, Secretary of the Board  
Algoma District School Board  
644 Albert Street East  
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 2Y7***

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.

## ***Appealing 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, given notification of your intention to appeal the decision to:

***Mr. Mario Turco, Secretary of the Board  
Algoma District School Board  
644 Albert Street East  
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 2Y7***

The notice of appeal must:

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

## ***Steps Involved 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 recommendations 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 recommendations 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 recommendation;
- 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.

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN SPECIFIC AREAS OF THE ALGOMA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

### **Alexander Henry Field School (2 sites)**

This is a program to assist students to reach the readiness level of employment, community placement or further education. The students at Alexander Field School range between fifteen and twenty-one years of age. They present with learning difficulties such that, at this time in their development, they would not be expected to successfully complete a program of studies in a regular secondary school.

### **Superior Heights Community Education Program**

Students of high school age who require a life skills focus attend this program for students with a developmental disability. As part of the program, students may be integrated into the community

### **Gifted**

Program for gifted children is provided within the regular classroom setting. Based on Ontario Curriculum expectations, learning extensions are developed through the collaboration of student, teacher and parents. Differentiated learning extensions which focus on student interests, independent projects, creative and high level thinking as well as communication skills are provided to meet the needs of gifted children. (A course may be offered to secondary students through Continuing Education.)

### **Integrated Behaviour Model**

This is a program for students with behaviour disorders. While receiving intensive support, students are integrated into the regular classroom. The emphasis of the program is to assist the student in academic and social development and to foster skills in coping with behavioural difficulties.

**Location:** Isabel Fletcher P.S.  
Anna McCrea P.S.  
Ben R. McMullin P.S.  
River View P.S.

### **Special Education Classes**

Classes for elementary aged children are designed for students with developmental disabilities. It is an inclusive school setting with integration when appropriate.

**Location:** Tarentorus P.S.

**Supported Learning Class**

This program for students with mild intellectual delays emphasizes functional academics in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. These students require some life or social skills programming. Integration opportunities are scheduled with socially appropriate same-aged peers for physical education, art, music and special events with appropriate modifications and accommodations:

**Location:** Kiwedin P.S.

**Intensive Communication Class**

This program is designed for those students identified with Autism/Pervasive Developmental Disorder. The focus is on improving communication skills.

**Location:** Parkland P.S. (2 classes)

**Learning for Emotional and Academic Development (L.E.A.D.)**

This is a small group setting offering individualized programming with integration at an age appropriate level in areas where students can achieve success. These classes are school specific and students are prioritized by need.

**Location:** Arthur Henderson P.S.  
Aweres P.S.  
Central Algoma Secondary School  
Central Avenue P.S.  
Chapleau P.S.  
Elliot Lake Secondary School  
Michipicoten High School  
Thessalon P.S.  
W. C. Eaket Secondary School

**Multi Needs Class**

This program is for students with a combination of learning or other disorders, impairments or physical handicaps that are of such a nature that intensive support is required.

**Location:** Anna McCrea P.S.

**Rockhaven School for Exceptional Children**

Rockhaven is a segregated school for students with a developmental disability (ages 5-21). Students receive individualized academic, life skills, social, emotional, behavioural and communication programs. Every effort is made to integrate the students and to explore work placements in their community.

**Location:** Serpent River

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (S.E.A.C.)**

All school boards are required, under Provincial legislation to establish a Special Education Advisory Committee (S.E.A.C.). Membership is mainly composed of delegates of provincial associations, selected by their associations and representing up to twelve local associations. Two trustees and a native representative are mandated to the committee. Resource personnel in the form of the Superintendent and coordinators in the Special Education department attend as well. A chair and vice-chair are elected from among the voting members and the agenda is generated by the chair using suggestions from the standing committee. Meetings are held monthly on the third month of the month in the D.T. Walkom Room of the Education Centre at twelve noon. The public is welcome.

The members of the Special Education Advisory Committee are responsible to approve the Annual Special Education Plan, keep itself informed on current legislation and special education issues and to advise the Board on programs and services for exceptional students. A list of S.E.A.C. members and contact information is available through the Board office or your neighbourhood school.

### **ORGANIZATIONS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST PARENTS**

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

The following are represented on the Special Education Advisory Committee:

- ◆ Canadian Mental Health Association – 705-759-0458
- ◆ Children’s Rehabilitation Centre Algoma – 705-759-1131
- ◆ Community Living Algoma – 705-253-700/1-800-448-8097
- ◆ Down Syndrome Society – 705-253-6882/1-800-883-5608
- ◆ Infant & Child Development Program – 705-942-3103
- ◆ Learning Disabilities Association – 705-942-4310
- ◆ Member(s) – Community At Large (Hearing)