

A Parent's Guide

To the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee Process



Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

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Section I - Introduction

Using this Guide

The Ministry of Education has outlined a formal process involving a committee, the **Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)** to identify students who are exceptional. The purpose of this document is to provide a guide for parents¹ regarding the IPRC process.

It has been developed in a *Question & Answer* format for ease of use. Many of the terms and expressions used in this guide may be unfamiliar. If you have questions or require further clarification about the terms, expressions or any items covered in this *Guide*, we encourage you to discuss these with the principal of your child's school. We hope that parents and other members of our school communities will use this *Guide* as a resource for understanding the IPRC process.

In addition to this *Guide*, a companion document, *A Parent's Guide to the Individual Education Plan (IEP)*, has been developed. A copy of this document can be obtained from the principal of your child's school.

Our hope is to periodically revise this document to make it a better resource to parents. Your comments on this document are welcomed by the Assistant to the Superintendent, Special Education at 722-3555, ext. 274.

¹ Throughout this Guide, "parents" will refer to both parents and guardians.

IPRC At A Glance

- IPRC stands for: Identification, Placement and Review Committee.
- Its purpose is to identify students who have specific learning exceptionalities based on evidence, documentation and diagnosis.
- Ensures that when your child is identified as exceptional the appropriate placement supports his/her learning strengths and needs.
- The identification and placement is reviewed on an annual basis.
- An IPRC can be held at any point during the school year.
- You can, and are encouraged to, participate in your child's IPRC meetings on an annual basis.
- A discussion about programming, or your child's IEP, is a separate meeting that may follow the IPRC meeting.
- Parents are encouraged to:
 - communicate/provide any evidence or documentation that would support the learning strengths and needs of their child;
 - participate in IPRC meetings or request IPRC meetings when updated or new evidence would support a change in identification;
 - contact the school's principal when unsure or require further clarification about their son/daughter's rights once identified as exceptional

Background

As all children are created in the image of God, they bring with them their own unique gifts and talents. We recognise and value that all students are unique and special in their own way and that some have diverse and exceptional learning needs. At the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, we strive to meet the learning needs of all students within an inclusive environment.

As the child's primary care-giver and educator, the role of the parent is a very important and crucial one in a child's education. Education is truly a partnership between home, school and parish, with the ultimate goal being what is best for the child. At the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), information from the parents of the student is extremely important. At the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, we value parental input and encourage your participation.

At Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, we have developed our special education program based on a philosophy of inclusion. This philosophy expresses our belief that the learning needs of all students are best served within their local school. Inclusion means that students with exceptional needs fully participate in the activities of the school. Learning takes place in regular classrooms along with other students of the same age group. Depending on the individual needs of the student, as outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP), the classroom environment may be augmented by teaching opportunities in other locations in the school such as the resource room.

Our values and philosophy are articulated in our mission and vision statements as well as our strategic plan: Our Faith ~ Our Future.

Our Mission

Our inclusive Catholic learning community is dedicated to excellence.

We give witness to the teachings of Jesus Christ, as we journey in faith and learning, to develop the God-given abilities of each person.

Our Vision

Nurturing faith, illuminating minds, inspiring hearts, and empowering hands – we are working together to transform our world.

Our Strategic Plan

Our Board's strategic plan is articulated in *Our Faith ~ Our Future*. This plan will shape the future of Catholic education in our Board and will guide us as we make decisions about faith-filled learning in our schools. Our strategic plan includes the above vision and mission statements which help form our identity and serve as the foundation for our strategic priorities and goals. You can access the entire plan at <http://goo.gl/dNFKfT>



Section II – Questions & Answers

The Exceptional Student

How is an exceptional student defined?

All students are unique. They come to school with special gifts to share and needs for growth. The *Education Act*, the legal rules and regulations that govern how school boards operate, defines an exceptional student as:

“a [student] 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. Definitions of these exceptionalities can be found in Appendix 2 of this *Guide* on page 20.

The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee

What is the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee?

The Ministry of Education, in Regulation 181/98 of the *Education Act*, requires that all school boards set up Identification, Placement, and Review Committees (IPRC). An IPRC team is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal (or vice-principal designate) or a superintendent of the board.

What is the role of the IPRC?

The IPRC will perform the following functions:

- decide whether or not the student should be identified as exceptional;
- identify the student's exceptionality (or exceptionalities), according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education (see Appendix 2);
- decide an appropriate placement for the student in accordance with our board's philosophy of inclusion; and
- review the identification and placement at least once in each school year.

How is an IPRC meeting requested?

An IPRC meeting may be requested by you, the parent, or by the principal of your child's school. The principal will arrange the meeting upon receiving your request in writing. The IPRC process is a formal one that school boards are obliged to follow. As a parent, please be aware that there are some defined timelines associated with this process.

When will an IPRC meeting take place?

If the school team is initiating the IPRC meeting you will receive notification inviting you to participate. This invitation will be sent at least 10 business days prior to the meeting.

Within 15 days of receiving your written request, the principal will provide you a written statement indicating approximately when the IPRC will be held, and for initial IPRC meetings, you will also receive a copy of this *Guide*.

We recognize that the legal requirements of the IPRC process may seem very formal. At the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, it is our intention to keep the student and his or her needs and interests at the heart of this process. We sincerely wish to work together with you, the parent, to provide your child with an educational experience to best meet their needs.

Attending the IPRC Meeting

May parents attend the IPRC meeting?

Yes. At the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, we recognize that parents have valuable information regarding their child. We encourage and welcome parental involvement in the IPRC process. Ministry of Education regulations entitle parents and students (if 16 years of age or older) to be present at and participate in all IPRC 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?

In addition to the IPRC members, the parents and student (if 16 years of age or older), other people who can bring their expertise or knowledge of the student may be invited to attend an IPRC meeting. These include:

- your child's teacher, special education staff, Board support staff, or the representative of an agency, who may provide further information or clarification pertaining to the identification
- a person who may represent and support you or speak on behalf of you or your child, if you wish
- an interpreter, if one is required.

Either you or the principal may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting.

Establishing IPRC Meetings

What information will parents receive about the IPRC meeting?

Legislation requires that the principal provide you with written notification of the meeting at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. This written notification will indicate the date, time, and place of the meeting, and it will invite and encourage you to attend.

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

What if parents are unable to make the scheduled meeting?

If you are unable to make the scheduled meeting, please contact your child's Principal to arrange an alternative date or time. If you choose not to attend the meeting, we also encourage you to notify the school. The meeting can proceed in your absence.

After the meeting, the principal will forward to you the IPRC *Written Statement of Decision* that you would have received if you had attended the meeting. This is a formal document summarizing the decisions made at the meeting. If you have any questions about this document, please contact your child's principal.

At the Meeting

What happens at an IPRC meeting?

In Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, we begin our IPRC meeting with a prayer. The principal introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting. The objective of the meeting is to determine whether or not your child is exceptional under the Ministry of Education definitions, and what placement within the school will best suit your child's learning needs.

The IPRC is the forum for a formal discussion around your child's strengths and needs. During the meeting information about your child will be shared. Those at the meeting recognize and respect the need for confidentiality. The IPRC will review and discuss all information about your child including:

- a review and discussion of assessments and reports about your child
- a discussion of your child's strengths and needs
- consideration of additional information that you or others contribute about your child
- any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for your child.

You are encouraged to ask questions and join in the discussion. A decision is documented in a *Written Statement of Decision* after all presented information is considered, the IPRC is satisfied with the designation of exceptionality, the best placement type, and that such a decision is consistent with your preferences.

The IPRC does not discuss details contained within an Individual Education Plan nor what programming will look like. A team meeting, outside of the formalities of the IPRC, is the appropriate setting to discuss program development and its implementation.

What will the IPRC's *Written Statement of Decision* include?

The format of the IPRC's *Written Statement of Decision* is based on Ministry of Education regulation. It will indicate:

- whether your child has been identified as exceptional and, if so, in what way is your child exceptional

- a description of your child’s strengths and needs
- an appropriate placement decision
- the categories and definitions of any exceptionalities identified, as they are defined by the Ministry of Education.

The *Written Statement of Decision* also includes an area where parents can record their comments.

What is a special education program?

As no two children are exactly alike, each child has different learning needs. We recognize that all students progress and learn at their own pace and in their own unique way. The Ontario Curriculum is the classroom teacher’s guide to the content and level to be taught at each grade. Classroom teachers modify assignments and may vary learning goals for each child as needed. For students whose learning needs are best served by a program that differs significantly from the Ontario Curriculum, we develop programming to meet their learning strengths and needs. A special education program is defined in the *Education Act* as an educational program that:

- is based on and updated by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation
- includes a plan (called an Individual Education Plan or IEP) containing specific expectations and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional student.

Many students may already have an IEP prior to the formal identification process of the IPRC.

Developing Programs for Exceptional Students

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.

These programs and services may include:

- additional support in the classroom
- program support outside the regular classroom
- curriculum modifications and accommodations (see pages 9 & 10 of the *Parent's Guide to the Individual Education Plan*)
- educational and other assessment services
- professional staff to support student educational needs such as:
 - deaf and hard of hearing
 - speech and language services
 - blind and low vision
 - social skills

- work experience
- gifted screening
- section 23 class (through referral only)
- services through approved public third-party partners (e.g. occupational therapy)

What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a document developed at your child's school by the IEP Development Team (e.g. classroom teacher(s), special education resource teacher, principal) in consultation with the parent and student. The IEP may be in addition to, or in place of, the Ontario Curriculum.

For more information on the Individual Education Plan (IEP), please refer to *A Parent's Guide to the Individual Education Plan*, a companion guide to this document, available from the principal of your child's school.

The IEP may include:

- specific educational expectations
- an outline of the special education program and services that will be received by your child
- a statement about the methods by which your child's progress will be reviewed
- a plan for transition to outline the daily, short-term and long-term changes in a student's program

The IEP must be completed within 30 school days after the start of the school year or after an IPRC meeting. In the case of Secondary School, the IEP must be completed within 30 school days of the beginning of each semester. These timelines enable the schools to provide appropriate programming for a child in consultation with parents. The IEP is a “living document” and will change as your child's educational needs change. A copy of the child's IEP is given to the parents.

After the Meeting

What happens after the IPRC has made its decision?

If you agree with the IPRC decision, you will be asked to sign the *Written Statement of Decision* indicating that you agree with the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC. The *Written Statement of Decision* may be signed by you at the IPRC meeting or taken home and returned. If the IPRC has identified your child as an exceptional student and you have agreed with the IPRC identification and placement decision, the Principal of your child's school will ensure that a special education program is provided, and that an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed for your child.

If you do not agree with the IPRC decision, please see page 15 for further information.

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

A review IPRC meeting is held at least once in each school year, unless the principal of your child's school receives written notice from 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 after an IPRC placement decision.

What does an IPRC "Review" consider and decide?

During the annual review process, the IPRC considers the same type of information that was originally submitted. The committee conducting the review will examine your child's current strengths and needs along with any new evidence brought to the committee. The committee will review the placement and identification decisions and decide whether they should be continued or whether a different decision should now be made.

A "Review" will also allow for "de-identification" in a similar manner as "identification".

If Parents Disagree with the IPRC Decision

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

We recognise and appreciate that the partners in your child's education may not always agree about identification and placement. The decisions of the IPRC have important implications for how your child's education will be delivered. We believe that a child's interests are best served when all education partners come to an agreement or consensus. There are times when not all share the same views and opinions and we need to work through these differences. As the IPRC is a formal process, the means to settle differences around the IPRC decision is also very formal with specific timelines.

If you do not agree with either the identification or placement decision made by the IPRC, there are two options available to parents:

- within 15 days of receipt of the IPRC decision you can request that a second meeting be held to discuss your concerns. This request is made to the principal of your child's school. 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;
- within 30 days of receipt of the IPRC decision, file a notice of appeal with the Director of Education of the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, 46 Alliance Boulevard, Barrie, L4M 5K3.

It is important that the notice of appeal indicates the IPRC decision with which you disagree, and must include a statement that outlines your reasons for disagreeing with the decision.

If you do not agree with the IPRC decision and you do not appeal, the Board will instruct the principal to implement the IPRC decision.

The Appeal Process

What happens in the appeal process?

In the event that consensus can not be reached, the appeal process involves the following steps:

- the appeal board will be composed of three people (one of whom is selected by you, the parent) 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 an extension of time is mutually agreed upon by all parties);
- the appeal board will receive the material reviewed by the IPRC and may interview anyone, including you and your child, if he or she is 16 years old or over, who may be able to contribute information about the matter under appeal;
- the appeal board must make its recommendation within three days of the conclusion of the meeting. 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 Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, providing the reasons for its recommendations;
- within 30 days of receiving the appeal board's written statement, the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB will decide what action it will take with respect to the recommendations.

- you may accept the actions to be taken by the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, or you may further 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.

Section III - Appendices

Appendix 1

Organizations available to assist parents

Many parent organizations are available to provide information and support to parents of exceptional children. The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB's website lists the current members of the organizations that are members of the to the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

SEAC consists of members of the respective stakeholder organizations who are elected or appointed by their organizations to sit on this Committee and provide the Board with advice on all matters related to special education. Representing an organization on SEAC is another way that parents can become involved in their child's education. If you belong to an eligible organizations and have an interest in becoming involved with SEAC, we encourage you to make your wishes known to the chair/president of your organization or you may visit the SEAC website at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/seac/>

Appendix 2

Categories and Definitions of Exceptional Students

For the purpose of the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process, the Ministry of Education has developed five categories of exceptionality. Three of these categories (**bold**) are further divided into sub-categories (*italics*). If you require further information about a particular exceptionality, please contact the principal of your child's school.

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:

- 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 the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language.

Language Impairment

A learning disability 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.

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.

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

The Ministry of Education defines *learning disability* as one of a number of neuro-developmental 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 differences; 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:

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

Developmental Disability

- an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development

- an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development
- a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

Physical

Physical Disability

A condition with 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 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.

Appendix 3

If the committee decides that the student should be placed in a special education class, it must give reasons in its written statement of decision.

In making its placement decision, the IPRC may consider a range of options, such as:

- **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 (direct support).** The student is placed in the regular class for most or all of the day and receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom from 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 a qualified special education teacher.

In Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB we believe that full inclusion in the regular classroom supported with the appropriate programme is the best placement for our students. The Ministry has two more placements that diverge from Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB's vision of inclusion.

- **A special education class with partial integration.** 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.** 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.

Other options than these exist to meet the student's needs, and parents and board staff are encouraged to explore them. For example, there may be a need to apply for admission to:

- a **Provincial School** for students who are blind, deaf, or deaf-blind or a provincial Demonstration School for students who have severe learning disabilities;
- a facility that provides the necessary **care or treatment** appropriate to the student's condition.

Applications to Provincial Schools and provincial Demonstration Schools are coordinated and submitted by the school board. Applications to care and treatment facilities are made by the parent directly to the facility, although school board staff may be able to assist in gathering the appropriate documentation.

Appendix 4

Ministry of Education Provincial and Demonstration Schools

The Ministry of Education operates provincial and demonstration schools throughout Ontario for students who are deaf, blind, deaf-blind, have severe learning disabilities, as well as those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These schools service a very small number of students across the province and are intended to deliver educational programs to students whose learning challenges are very significant. 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 School
350 Dundas Street West
Belleville, Ontario
K8P 1B2
Phone: (613) 967-2830

Trillium School
347 Ontario Street South
Milton, Ontario
L9T 3X9
Phone: (905) 878-8428

Amethyst School
1090 Highbury Avenue
London, Ontario
N5Y 4V9
Phone: (519) 453-4408

Schools for the deaf:

Ernest C. Drury School
255 Ontario Street South
Milton, Ontario
L9T 2M5
Phone: (905) 878-2851
TTY: (905) 878-7195

Robarts School
1090 Highbury Avenue
P.O. Box 7360, Station E
London, Ontario
N5Y 4V9
Phone & TTY: (519) 543-4400

Sir James Whitney School
350 Dundas Street West
Belleville, Ontario
K8P 1B2
Phone & TTY: (613) 967-2823

School for the blind and deaf-blind:

W. Ross Macdonald School
350 Brant Avenue
Brantford, Ontario
N3T 3J9
Phone: (519) 759-0730

Francophone school for the deaf and those with learning disabilities:

Centre Jules-Léger
281 rue Lanark
Ottawa, Ontario
K1Z 6R8
Phone: (613) 761-9300
TTY: (613) 761-9302 & (613) 761-9304

Additional information can be obtained from:

Principal of your child's school, or

Superintendent of Education
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board
46 Alliance Boulevard
Barrie, Ontario
L4M 5K3
Phone: (705) 722-3555

Notes & Questions

Please use these additional pages to record notes or questions you may have for the Principal of your child's school or the IPRC.



Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board