

A Parent's Guide

To the Individual Education Plan



Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

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Section I - Introduction

Using this Guide

This document has been developed to provide a guide for parents¹ regarding the Individual Education Plan (IEP). It describes how the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board provides programs and services to exceptional students in keeping with our values and with the Ministry of Education expectations outlined in the *Education Act*.

It has been developed in a *Question & Answer* format for ease of use. Many of the terms and expressions used in this handbook 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 IEP.

In addition to this *Guide*, a companion document, *Parent's Guide to the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)*, has been developed. A copy of this document may be obtained from the Principal of your child's school.

Our hope is to periodically revise this document to make it a better resource for parents. Your comments and suggestions are most helpful. 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 or guardians.

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 student's primary care-giver and educator, the role of the parent is a very important and crucial one in student's education. Education is truly a partnership between home, school and parish, with the ultimate goal being what is best for the student.

For students with exceptional learning needs, a special education program may best meet their learning goals. A special education program is an individualized program, developed by the school team in consultation with parents. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) outlines the accommodations required and/or programme goals the student is working towards that may differ or vary from the grade-level curriculum.

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 and in the regular classroom as much as possible. 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 strengths and needs of the student, as outlined in the IEP, the classroom environment may be augmented by teaching opportunities elsewhere 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

An Individual Education Plan

What is an Individual Education Plan?

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written document (see Appendix 1) detailing the special education program and/or services that may be required by a particular student. In addition to capturing the essential student information, such as name, gender, date of birth, etc., the IEP also requires other details that enable the school team to develop a comprehensive profile of the student.

For most students, their education is shaped by the expectations outlined in the Ontario Curriculum for the appropriate grade and subject. For exceptional students, and many students who are not identified as exceptional, their learning strengths and needs may be better met by a programme that is tailored to their unique needs so that they can achieve their individual learning goals and expectations.

“Exceptional student” is a term used by the Ministry of Education and has very specific definitions. The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) is responsible for identifying students as exceptional. These students must have an IEP. An IEP may also be developed for other students who have not been identified as exceptional, but still require special education programs and/or services based on evidence gathered by the school team.

The requirement to develop IEPs for students is clearly defined by the *Education Act* and by Ministry of Education standards that our Board follows.

An IEP builds on the particular student’s strengths, interests and learning needs and will be supported by relevant and current assessment information.

The IEP also assists teachers as they continually assess an exceptional student’s progress throughout the school year. The written IEP provides

a framework for ongoing communication between the school and parents regarding the student's achievements.

Our IEPs reflect our Board's commitment to providing special education programs and services within the context of our Catholic values, *Our Faith ~ Our Future* strategic plan and, our vision and mission statements. At the school level, the principal is responsible for ensuring the needs of exceptional students, documented in the IEP, are implemented.

When is an IEP developed for a student?

Considerable thought and assessment go into developing an IEP. An IEP is developed for a student when accommodations are required for them to access curriculum. An IEP will be developed for one of the following reasons:

- For students who are identified as exceptional through an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). The IPRC process is described in a companion guide, *The Parent's Guide to the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee*. If you have questions regarding the IPRC process, please contact the principal of your child's school
- For students who are not identified as exceptional through an IPRC, but who have been deemed by the Board to require a special education program and/or service. Many students have unique learning needs and would benefit greatly from a special education program, yet have not been deemed as "exceptional" through an IPRC under the Ministry of Education criteria (see Appendix 2).

Developing an IEP

Who is involved in developing an IEP at the school?

At Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, we use a team approach to meet the diverse needs of our students. The IEP is developed at the student's school. Under the leadership of the principal, IEPs are developed collaboratively by school and sometimes board staff members, who are most familiar with learning expectations for students. We refer to these staff as the "IEP Development Team". This team may consist of staff members, such as the classroom teacher, Special Education Resource Teacher, support staff and board staff, who have a role, either directly or indirectly, in implementing a student's individualized program. They possess the knowledge and qualifications necessary to develop the most effective plan for a student. The IEP Development Team members will vary from year to year and as the student's strengths, needs and grades change.

What is the role of the parent?

The involvement of parents is always critical to student success in our school communities. At the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, we recognize that parents have valuable information regarding their child's strengths, needs, learning styles and interests. While developing the IEP is the responsibility of the school team, the role that parents play in consultation is also very important.

We encourage and welcome parental involvement in assisting with the ongoing development of your child's individualized program. The information that you share with school staff about your child is of great value in this process.

When is an IEP developed?

At the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, we are committed to the timely preparation of students' IEPs. This ensures students obtain the support needed as quickly as possible.

For staff to develop an individualized program, they need to gain an understanding and appreciation of the student's strengths, interests and learning needs. This process starts at the beginning of a new school year in our elementary schools or at the start of a semester in secondary schools.

The Ministry of Education has ensured that there are specific timelines as outlined in *Regulation 181/98* of the *Education Act*. The *Act* requires that an IEP be developed within thirty (30) school days of an exceptional student's placement in a special education program. "Placement" is understood to mean one of the following:

- the first day of a student's attendance in a new special education program that would be specified following an IPRC
- the first day of the new school year or semester for students who were previously, and continue to be, identified as exceptional through an IPRC
- the first day of a student's attendance in a special education program as a result of a change in placement following an IPRC.

The same timelines apply for the development of an IEP for a student who is not identified as exceptional through an IPRC.

The Special Education Program

How does an IEP and a Special Education Program link to the Ontario Curriculum?

The Ontario Curriculum outlines what content and skills are taught for each grade level and course / subject in schools throughout the Province of Ontario. For some students, this Curriculum does not best serve his/her learning strengths and needs. A special education program, often based on the Ontario Curriculum, or service is one that is developed to address the individual strengths and needs for these students.

The program may contain supports (accommodations) the student requires that assist the student to achieve the Ontario Curriculum. It may contain specific learning goals and expectations that address a modified or alternative educational curriculum.

What are accommodations?

An accommodation is one special education strategy that can be used to assist students in achieving the learning expectations of the Ontario Curriculum. Some students require accommodations in order to access and meet the regular grade expectations. Students requiring accommodations, but no other supports or special education strategies, are typically working on the same curriculum as other students in their class. They require accommodations in order to access the curriculum, complete work or demonstrate what they have learned. Examples of these kinds of accommodations are:

- chunking work or assignments
- use of technology (e.g. calculator, specialized software, sensory equipment)
- repetition or simplification of instructions.

What are modified curriculum expectations?

Expectations from the standard Ontario Curriculum can be modified to best meet the student's learning strengths and needs. Typically, expectations are modified in grade level, in number, or complexity. Examples of modifications are:

- a student in Grade 8 working on mathematics expectations at the Grade 4 level
- reducing the number of, or simplifying in complexity of the overall expectations in Grade 6 Social Studies

Curriculum modifications developed for students are outlined in their IEP through written goals.

What are alternative curriculum expectations?

Alternative curriculum expectations address learning needs of the student that are not included in the Ontario Curriculum. Examples of alternative expectations are:

- learning self-help skills like dressing or feeding oneself
- greeting people in a socially and appropriate manner

How are programme goals developed?

Both modified and alternative curriculum expectations outlined in an IEP provide the starting point from which to measure students' progress toward achieving their individualized expectations and annual goals. These follow an assessment of the students' current levels of achievement which serves as a baseline or starting point. The Ministry requires the use of the most recent Provincial Report Card marks to serve as the baseline when initiating the development of modified programme goals so that the learning needs of the student are addressed. This baseline is maintained for the duration of achieving the annual goal or the end of the semester/school year.

Gathering Information

What information is used to develop an IEP?

Developing an individualized program for a student requires that the IEP Development Team members have a full understanding of the student. Much of the information shared with the IEP Development Team is confidential, as is a student's IEP. The IEP is shared with the parent and educators who are supporting the implementation of the program.

Some of the sources used to gain a fuller understanding of the student:

- An assessment of the student's current performance and achievement.
- The *Ontario Student Record (OSR)* is a confidential file stored securely in the school office that contains relevant information about each student. When a student changes schools within Ontario, that file is forwarded to their new school. Information in the OSR is confidential and made available only to those working, either directly or indirectly, with your child.
- As a parent, you know your child in a way that others do not. The information you share with the school for the development of the IEP is of great importance and is highly valued.
- An older student often can articulate what supports he or she feels they need in the classroom.
- Other school staff that have worked closely with the student and have developed an appreciation and respect for the student's unique learning style and needs may be consulted. The insights and information they have about the way the student best learns is of great value.
- Other assessments and documentation that pertain to the student's learning needs may be accessed, including those that parents may have submitted.

The Transition Plan

What is a Transition Plan?

A transition plan is part of a student's IEP and serves as a guide which outlines the daily, short term and long term changes in a student's program. The Ministry of Education requires all students with an IEP to have a transition plan.

The transition plan is reviewed and updated as part of the IEP review process. The transition plan addresses the physical, social/emotional and learning strengths and needs of the student as they move through their academic career.

Some examples of macro transitions may include:

- entry to school
- grade to grade
- school to school
- elementary school to secondary school
- secondary school to post-secondary pathway

Micro transitions are day to day transitions including activity to activity and class to class.

Contained within the transition plan are:

- individual goals
- actions required to achieve those goals
- identified individuals responsible for the actions required
- specific timelines for completion

Evaluating Student Learning

How and when are the Goals in the IEP evaluated?

Determining student progress and assessment of their learning is a continuous process. The student's progress toward meeting his or her individual goals and learning expectations is evaluated during regular school reporting periods.

If a student receives accommodations only for a particular curriculum subject, reporting occurs on the Provincial Report Card with no mention of the accommodations or reference to the IEP. Achievement is reported as per Ministry guidelines for the grade.

The annual modified and alternative programme goals are evaluated at the appropriate reporting period. Modified programme goals are reported on the Provincial Report Card. You will see the IEP box checked beside the subject that is modified (non-credit) and a phrase, a variation of the following, will appear in the comment box:

This (letter grade/percentage mark) is based on the achievement of expectations in the IEP that *vary from the Grade X expectations and is an increase/decrease in the number of curriculum expectations*

Alternative programme goals are reported on the Alternative Report Card which in most cases accompany the Provincial Report Card.

In the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, the student's progress toward IEP goals and expectations is formally evaluated twice a year in both elementary and semestered secondary schools. Though the IEP is usually formally evaluated only at reporting times, the classroom / subject teacher in collaboration with the IEP Development Team may make slight adjustments as required to meet the changing needs of the student.

Is consideration given during provincial testing?

Annually, Provincial testing is a standard requirement for reading, writing and mathematics in Grades 3 and 6, in mathematics in Grade 9 and literacy in Grade 10. This testing is administered in a very specific manner in keeping with the requirements of the Educational Quality Assurance Organization (EQAO). The Ministry has given the responsibility for determining the time, testing conditions and level of assistance the teacher can give to ensure a high level of consistency from school to school.

EQAO recognizes that special consideration may need to be given to some students during testing allowing accommodations outlined on their IEP. Details of what is permitted is outlined in the *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions and Exemptions* which is updated on an annual basis.

Meeting Changing Needs

How does the IEP change to meet the student's changing needs?

The IEP is a *living document* and a *formal document*.

As a *living document*, we mean that as the student progresses and develops, their individualized program will be reviewed continuously and adjusted to best suit their learning needs. As a *living document*, the classroom / subject teacher in collaboration with the IEP Development Team may adjust the IEP to meet the changing needs of the learner on an ongoing basis.

At the same time, it is an individualized program that was developed and agreed upon at a point in time. As a *formal document*, the IEP is reviewed, and the student's progress with respect to IEP goals is evaluated at specific reporting times of the year. A student's needs and abilities are constantly changing. Thus regular review and updates are important to keep the IEP program moving forward.

As the IEP changes, what is the parent's role?

When an IEP is created for a student at the start of a school year, the process of developing an individualized program for a student is not complete. As additional information becomes available, or as the needs of the learner change, ongoing discussions between the teacher, school support staff, parent and student remain key to further shaping and developing the student's program. All partners need to be aware of the goals and expectations outlined in the IEP. When the IEP is first developed, the parent or guardian receives a copy. As goals and expectations change, they will be provided with a revised copy. Consultations that take place with parents and students as part of the IEPs ongoing development are documented on the IEP.

At Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB, we value parental input and look forward to their participation.

Appendix 1

Sample IEP Form

The following pages provide you with a blank sample IEP form. The goals and expectations in an IEP vary greatly from student to student. If you have questions or require further clarification about the IEP, we encourage you to discuss these with the principal of your son/daughter's school.



SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
46 Alliance Blvd., BARRIE, Ontario L4M 5K3
705 722 3555

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN

Student Profile

Name:		Gender:	DOB:
Grade:	Year:	OEN:	IPRC Most Recent Date:
School:		Principal:	

Reasons for Developing the IEP

Student not formally identified but requires Special Education Program/Services, including modified/alternative learning expectations and/or accommodations

IEP Initial Date:	IEP Completion Date:	Most Recent IPRC Date:
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Assessment Data Used in the Development of the IEP

Source	Date
.	

This is the first page of a blank IEP and is where relevant information about your son/daughter's individualized program is recorded.

IEP Development Team

Member(s)	Position

Health Support Services

Support Service	Administered By	Description
		.

Individualized Learning Equipment

.

Elementary School Program Exemptions

Educational Rationale Required:

Provincial Assessment

This is not a Provincial Assessment year for this student.

Areas of Strengths & Needs

STRENGTHS	NEEDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">..	<p>This is a sample of what may appear on page 2 of the IEP. A student's strengths and needs help to determine which instructional, environmental, and assessment accommodations are being implemented.</p>

Accommodations

Instructional Accommodations	Environmental Accommodations	Assessment Accommodations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">.

Subjects, Courses, or Alternative Programs to which the IEP Applies

Summary

Subject Course	Type	Subject Course	Type
. - All Strands	Modified	.	Accommodation Only
. - No Alternative Curriculum	Alternative		

Details

Modified Program - .
Curriculum Strand: All Strands
Annual Program Goals: .
Current Level of Achievement .
Letter Grade / Mark: .
.
Teaching Strategy .

This is a sample of the *Summary* of subjects / courses in which the student is enrolled. It will identify whether the subject / course is accommodated only, modified or whether the subject is Alternative programming. Should the student have modified or alternative programming the *Details* section will specifically list the 'learning expectations' as performance tasks or culminating tasks that allow the student to work towards achieving the annual program goal.

Alternative Program - .	
Alternative Curriculum: No Alternative Curriculum	
Annual Program Goals: .	
Current Level of Achievement: .	
Letter Grade / Mark: .	Curriculum Grade Level: .
Learning Expectations:	
.	.
Teaching Strategy .	Assessment Method .

Evaluation of Expectation

Human Resources

Position	Location	Frequency

Transition Plan

Type: .
 Goal: .

Action	Responsibility	Timeline

Consultation

Activity Date	Activity	Outcome

Evaluation Dates

February, June

Report Format

Provincial Report Card

IEP Initial Date:

IEP Completion Date:

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

A final page will outline the Human Resources involved where applicable. It will also list the actions required for the mandatory Transition Plan. This is the *Consultation* page. It contains a record of when significant revisions and consultations around IEP development have taken place. It also provides a place for you to make comments regarding your child's IEP. The principal signs the IEP and invites the parent/guardian to sign as well. A signed copy is placed in the OSR.

Notes and Questions

Please use this page to record notes or questions you may have for the Principal about the IEP.



Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board