

## **Questions and Answers Parents May Have Regarding Special Education**

The following Qs and As from the Ontario Ministry of Education are intended to provide general information regarding special education programs and services. They are not intended to answer specific questions or to serve as legal advice regarding any particular issue. If parents want additional details or wish to discuss issues related to their child(ren), they should contact their local school/board for further information.

### **Questions about Special Education in General**

#### **What is “special education”?**

A special education program includes a plan with specific objectives and an outline of educational services that meets the needs of exceptional students who typically require additional supports in order to meet their learning potential. Special education services are defined as facilities and resources , including support staff and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program. For more information, [see page A4 in the Guide for Educators](#).

Special education can be offered in the regular classroom, or in a special education class, depending on how the school board provides special education programs and services. Many school boards post information regarding special education programs on their website. For more information, contact your local school principal. School board profiles [can be found here on the Ontario Ministry of Education website](#).

#### **How does special education work?**

A child may be provided a special education program if:

- Formally identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC); or when
- Both the parents and the school agree that a child should receive a special education program in a regular classroom.

In both cases, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be developed for your child. Parents must be invited to help develop the IEP. Other people who have expertise may also be involved in developing the IEP. These people may include:

- Student (if over 16 years of age);
- School staff (principal, classroom teacher(s), special education teacher, teacher assistant);
- Previous teachers;
- Community and other professionals involved with the student.

For more information, [see page 13-14 in this 2004 IEP Resource Guide](#).

#### **How do I get special education program for my child?**

If you believe that your child needs a special education program, contact your local school and arrange to speak with the principal. The school principal will discuss the ways the school might meet your

child's needs including steps involved in having your child receive a special education program. information, contact your local school principal. [School board profiles can be found here online](#). For more information on how to access special education programs and services, go [here](#).

### **What if my child just needs a little extra help, but not special education?**

If you believe that your child needs additional learning support at school you will want to contact your local school and speak to the principal and/or the classroom teacher.

For more information, [contact your local school principal](#).

### **Will my child's progress in the special education program be monitored?**

When your child receives a special education program there is an annual review of the progress of your child and whether the program and services are meeting your child's needs. For more information on special education programs and services,

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/ontario.html>

### **Questions Parents May Have When a Child is Entering School**

#### **I already know my child's special needs. When do I tell the school?**

If you know your child has special educational needs you should contact your local school and ask to speak to the principal to find out how and when to enrol your child and to plan what additional programs and services should be organized .

#### **Will my child have to attend a school outside of our neighbourhood?**

Your child will likely attend the local school in your attendance area however, you should contact your local school principal to discuss this.

#### **What do I need to know about my child starting school for the first time?**

The following is a list of some information that you will need to know about your child starting school for the first time:

- School programs;
- Skills and knowledge your child will need to make the entry to school successful;
- School information (e.g., procedures related to inclement weather, safe arrival, transportation, snacks, recess, policies on parent volunteers, assessment, report cards, parent-teacher interviews);

Non-school services information (i.e., child-care services, community supports, Public Health services, parenting courses available in the community).

For additional information on what information you need to know about your child starting school [contact your local school principal](#).

#### **Will I have to pay for any of the special education programs and services the school board offers my child?**

No. You will not have to pay for the special education programs and services that the school board offers your child.

**If I feel my child needs more than the board can provide, can I hire someone on my own to assist my child at school?**

No, you cannot hire someone on your own to assist your child at school. The school principal ensures that qualified staff is assigned to teach at your child's school.

**Can a family member or family friend attend school with my child to offer assistance, as a volunteer?**

If you are interested in offering assistance, as a volunteer, at your child's school contact, your local school to find out its policy on parent volunteers.

Note: For more detailed information on your child entering school please see:

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/planningentry.html>

**What if I want my child to be in a regular classroom?**

A child with special education needs would normally be registered in a regular classroom unless the parent or the principal requested an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) to be held to determine whether the student is an exceptional pupil and what the appropriate classroom placement should be based on the best interests of the individual student.

Further information on the IPRC process [can be found at the following link](#).

**What if I want my child to learn in a special school or special education class?**

Similar to the answer listed above, if a parent wishes their child to learn in a special school or special education class, they have the right to request an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) be called to determine whether the student is an exceptional pupil and, if so, what type of educational placement is appropriate.

**Do I have the right to refuse a particular teacher for my child?**

Parents have the right to voice their concerns about the choice of teacher for their child. However, it is ultimately up to the principal of the school in which the child is registered to make a final decision about who the teacher will be. If parents are unhappy with the principal's decision, they may take their concerns up with their local school board. However, the hope is that with consistent and ongoing communication between schools and parents, such disagreements may be avoided.

[The following resource document \(Shared Solutions\) to prevent and resolve conflicts](#) may be of use for parents who have a disagreement with schools or school boards.

**Do I have the right to home school my child?**

Parents have the right to home school their child under certain conditions. Details on home schooling can be found under [Policy and Program Memorandum 13](#).

**Does a school board have the right to suspend or expel a child with special education needs?**

Yes. There is a list of activities which, if committed by any student may lead to suspension or expulsion. This is how it works: If a student with special education needs does something for which the principal could suspend him/her, the principal is obligated to consider the child's special needs before deciding whether to suspend the child and, if suspending the child, before deciding for how long. If the suspension is for longer than 5 school days, the student must be referred to an education program for suspended students. If the student does one of the things for which he/she could be expelled, the principal must suspend the student but must take into account the student's special needs in determining for how long. The principal then investigates the incident and, in determining whether to recommend the student for expulsion, the principal must consider the student's special needs. If the principal decides not to refer the student for expulsion, he/she gives notice of this to the parents; if the principal decides to recommend the student for expulsion, he/she writes a report that goes to the board and the parents. The parents may respond to the report. The board will then hold an expulsion hearing at which the parents are entitled to be present and participate. Before deciding to expel the student, the board must consider the student's special needs. If the student is expelled from his/her school, the board must assign the student to another school. If the student is expelled from his/her board, the board must provide the student with a program for expelled students. Parents may appeal both a suspension and an expulsion of a student. Details about suspensions and expulsions [can be found through this link](#).

### **Will my child get an Ontario Secondary School Diploma?**

In order to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) the student must:

- Earn 18 compulsory credits and 12 optional credits
- Complete 40 hours of community service; and
- Pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC). The Literacy Course is designed for students who cannot demonstrate their learning very well in a test situation.

### **What other types of learning recognition are available to students?**

1. The Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) will be granted upon request by the student or their parent in the event that the student leaves school before achieving an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The condition of granting the OSSC requires a student to have earned a minimum of 14 credits; 7 of which are compulsory credits and 7 of which are optional.
2. Students who leave school before fulfilling the requirements for the OSSD or the OSSC may be granted a Certificate of Accomplishment (COA). The Principal may grant the CAO upon request from the parent or student. The Certificate of Accomplishment may be a useful means of recognizing achievement for students who plan to take certain vocational programs, further training, or for those who plan to seek employment after leaving school.

Further information regarding student recognition [may be found at this link](#).

### **Questions Parents May Have About Curriculum for Students with Special Education Needs**

#### **Will my child have the same curriculum as everyone else?**

Some students with special education needs may require accommodation to allow them to participate in the regular curriculum and to demonstrate achievement of specific skills or learning expectations. Accommodation ([IEP Resource Guide](#)) can include

- individualized teaching and assessment;
- human supports; and
- individualized equipment.

Some children with special education needs may require modifications ([IEP Resource Guide](#)) to the curriculum. Modifications are:

- changes made to the number of the learning expectations for a subject and/or
- changes made to the complexity of the learning expectations for a subject.

Sometimes, it may be necessary to develop alternative learning expectations for a child that are different from the learning expectations in the Ontario curriculum. These will be described in an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and discussed with parents.

### **Will my child have a special curriculum?**

The goal of education is for all students to access the Ontario curriculum. However in some circumstances students will have alternative learning expectations outside the Ontario curriculum.

### **How will I know how my child is progressing?**

The Provincial Report Card is one way the school reports to parents on the progress of their child. Teachers may also communicate the progress of your child through:

- Parent teacher conferences; §
- Interviews;
- Phone calls;
- Informal Reports.

[Visit this page for more information](#) on Reporting and the Provincial Report Card.

### **What if my child needs more time to learn?**

Some children may require more time and support to be successful in learning. If your child is receiving a special education program, the IEP can include accommodations that can allow for additional time to learn.

### **Do I have a say in what my child learns?**

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed when your child receives special education programs and services by those who will be working directly with your child. You must be consulted during the development of the IEP. In planning for a program for your child, the teacher begins by examining the curriculum expectations for the subject and grade for the individual child and his or her strengths and

learning needs to determine what options are available. Some children with special education needs are able, with certain accommodations, to participate in the regular curriculum and to demonstrate learning independently. Accommodations do not alter the provincial curriculum expectations for the grade level. Providing accommodations for a child with special education needs should be the first option considered in program planning. Instruction based on principles of universal design and differentiated instruction focuses on the provision of accommodations to meet the diverse need of learners. Some children will require modified expectations. Modified expectations are based on the regular grade-level curriculum, with changes in the number and/or complexity of expectations. Modified expectations must represent specific, realistic and measurable achievements, and must describe specific knowledge and/or skills that the child can demonstrate independently, given the appropriate assessment accommodations. All of this information is taken into consideration in the development of the IEP for your child to ensure that your child has access to the Ontario curriculum.

### **Do I have a say in how my child is taught?**

The school will invite you to share information and observations about your child's behaviour and learning in a variety of settings.

### **Do I have a say in how my child's learning will be evaluated?**

Your child's learning will be evaluated according to the Ontario Curriculum as modified by any assessment accommodations identified in your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) You will be consulted during the development of the IEP. For more information about Individual Education Plan (IEP) please visit: <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/index.html>

For more information on the Ontario curriculum and reporting: <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/>

### **Questions Parents May Have If Concerns Arise**

#### **How will I know if there are concerns about my child's learning?**

Students, parents, and educators all play important roles in the effective planning and implementation of a child's learning. Communication plays a huge role in this. Through ongoing consultation with the parents, school staff and students themselves, any concerns about a child's learning should be evident and clearly communicated. This should be part of a continuous process of dialogue in the development and implementation of a child's IEP. For more information about IEPs, please follow the following link: <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/index.html>

#### **How will I know if there are concerns about my child getting along with others?**

Parents should be meeting regularly throughout the school year with teachers and possibly other school board staff, at certain reporting periods, for updates on their child's progress. At these times, teachers and parents could discuss how successfully their child was interacting with others. Parents and teachers can, of course, do this more informally on a request basis.

#### **What if I don't think there are concerns, but the school does?**

If there is open, constructive dialogue that puts the child's needs at the centre of all decisions, creative and positive solutions can be found. Please refer to the Shared Solutions document for more

information on problem solving and resolution of conflicts:

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/shared.html>

### **What if I disagree about the plans to address concerns?**

If the plans for addressing the concerns are part of an IEP you will be consulted.

### **Questions Parents May Have About IPRCs**

What is an IPRC (Identification, Placement and Review Committee)? Every school board has one or more Identification, Placement, and Review Committees. These are commonly referred to as IPRCs. The purpose of an IPRC is to formally identify children who have special education needs as “exceptional pupils” and to place these exceptional pupils in settings where they can receive appropriate special education programs and services.

An IPRC is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer of the board.

### **What are the rules and guidelines about IPRCs?**

The IPRC process is somewhat formal and there are rules about how it must proceed. These rules are there to ensure that the process is fair to parents while protecting the ability of school boards to operate efficiently. Above all, the rules are intended to ensure that children with special education needs have their needs recognized and that they receive appropriate special education programs and services.

The rules that guide this process are in a regulation made under the Education Act. This regulation is called Regulation 181/98: Identification and Placement of Exceptional Pupils. The most important rules are summarized in a document called Highlights of Regulation 181/98 and it can be found here:

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/hilites.html>

The regulation itself can be found here: [https://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_980181\\_e.htm](https://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_980181_e.htm)

### **Does my child have to have an IPRC?**

It is not necessary for a child to be formally identified as an exceptional pupil in order for him or her to receive a special education program or special education services. If a parent and school principal agree that the child has special education needs and on the nature of special education program or services that are best for the child, there may be no need to take the step of having the child formally identified by an IPRC.

### **What if I want an IPRC to meet about my child, but the school doesn't think it is necessary?**

If either the parent or the school principal believe that the child requires a special education program or special education services, and if agreement cannot be reached, then the parent or school principal may request in writing that an IPRC decide the matter. When such a request is made, the IPRC must meet, consider the needs of the child, and decide whether the child is an exceptional pupil and, if so, what the appropriate placement for him or her is. If either the parent or principal requests an IPRC, the IPRC must

meet: the rules in Regulation 181/98 do not permit the other party to prevent this meeting from occurring.

### **Do I have the right to have input into my child's IPRC?**

Normally, a child's teacher will meet with the parent prior to the IPRC and help the parent to identify and prepare appropriate information for the IPRC. Parents have a right to attend their child's IPRC and the school principal has a responsibility to ensure that the parent is invited and has an opportunity to attend. In addition, parents have a right to speak and ask questions at the meeting and to provide the IPRC with any relevant information they consider important to the decisions of the IPRC. Parents are entitled to have an advocate accompany them to meetings to help them express concerns.

### **Who has the final say about what the IPRC decides?**

After hearing from the parent, teacher and others as appropriate, and satisfying themselves that they have all necessary information, the three members of the IPRC decide whether the child is an exceptional pupil. If the child is identified by the IPRC as exceptional, the committee members also decide on a placement where he or she can receive an appropriate special education program and special education services.

### **Do I have the right to appeal an IPRC decision?**

A parent who is unhappy with the decision of an IPRC can ask to meet again with the IPRC to consider the matter further. If the parent feels that the second meeting was unsuccessful, or if the parent does not believe a second meeting with the IPRC would be helpful, the parent can ask that the decision of the IPRC be reviewed, by writing to the director of education of the school board requesting a meeting with a Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB). If parents are not satisfied with the decision of the appeal at the school board level, they may apply and have their case heard by a provincial Special Education Tribunal.

The appeal process has specific rules and time limits. These are described in the document titled Highlights of Regulation 181/98. <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/hilites.html>

## **Questions Parents May Have About Assessments**

### **What kind of assessments are routinely done for all children?**

Assessments provide important insights into students' current skill levels in math, reading and writing. Teachers use assessment strategies such as observing, listening, and asking probing questions in order to assess and evaluate their students' achievement. The following are assessments that are routinely done for all children:

1. Diagnostic assessment is assessment that shows teachers where to begin the journey of instruction and learning. This type of assessment allows teachers to obtain information on the students' current performance levels and to use this information to plan activities in the classroom.
2. Formative assessment occurs during the learning process and informs teachers if they are on the right path. Formative-assessments allow teachers to see the progress their students are making as they acquire new skills.

3. Summative assessment is assessment of learning that shows teachers and students how far they have come and what has been achieved.

Diagnostic and formative assessments are done primarily for the purposes of determining a student's learning needs and providing feedback to the student. Summative assessments that teachers do after teaching are assessments of what the student has learned, and they also help provide teachers with direction for further programming.

To learn more about different assessment strategies and tools teachers may use to determine their students' learning needs and plan classroom activities, please visit the following Ministry documents:

*Combined Grades: Strategies to reach a variety of learners* at:

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/combined.pdf>

*A Guide to Effective Instruction in Writing: Kindergarten to Grade 3*

at: [https://www.eworkshop.on.ca/edu/resources/guides/Guide\\_Writing\\_%20K\\_3.pdf](https://www.eworkshop.on.ca/edu/resources/guides/Guide_Writing_%20K_3.pdf)

*Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6: Volume Two, 2006*, which is entirely devoted to assessment.

[https://www.eworkshop.on.ca/edu/resources/guides/Guide\\_Lit\\_456\\_Vol\\_1\\_Pt1\\_Junior\\_Learner.pdf](https://www.eworkshop.on.ca/edu/resources/guides/Guide_Lit_456_Vol_1_Pt1_Junior_Learner.pdf)

*Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario, 2004*, at:

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/literacy/panel/literacy.pdf>

### **What other sorts of assessments can be done?**

Currently school boards report in their special education plans, details of their assessment policies and procedures. A board's special education plan must provide information on the types of assessment tools used within the board, including educational assessments for students who are in need of special education programs and services. Information on educational and other assessments can be found in the Ministry document: Standards for School Boards' Special Education Plans at:

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/iepstand/iepstand.pdf>

### **How long will my child have to wait for an assessment?**

Currently, school boards report in their special education plans, details of average waiting times for assessments and the criteria for managing waiting lists if they exist. School board special education plans are available at most school board web sites. To locate your particular school board, please visit:

[https://esip.edu.gov.on.ca/english/profiles/board\\_directory.asp?ID=B15008](https://esip.edu.gov.on.ca/english/profiles/board_directory.asp?ID=B15008)

### **Can I request a particular type of assessment?**

Parents may ask their school board, through the school principal, to consider a particular type of assessment which may help to identify special education needs a student may have as well as to inform boards on program planning and delivery.

### **What if the board refuses my request for an assessment?**

Assessment is a continuous, complex process that is an integral part of teaching. It is something the teacher does every day, in a variety of informal and formal ways. An assessment provides information, including:

- a student's achievement;
- the level of the student's understanding;
- the effectiveness of a particular teaching technique;

Parents are encouraged to engage in ongoing discussions and collaborations with school board staff. Information from parents help to identify a student's strengths and needs and be may be used to inform program planning and delivery. In addition, the principal is required to seek parental consent prior to initiating some formal assessments.

**Does the board have to accept assessments of my child performed by private practitioners or assessments done at another board?**

No, they are not obliged to accept external assessments or assessments done at another board. Even so, parents and school boards should work collaboratively to review any assessment(s) on students which helps them to identify special education needs a student may have, as well as to inform boards on program planning and delivery. Parents are encouraged to meet with the school-based special education resource teacher to discuss the assessments and identify needs and strategies to meet the learning needs of their students.

**Questions Parents May Have About Evaluation and Report Cards**

**How will I know how my child is progressing?**

Parents play a major role in their children's progress at school. There are a number of ways parents are informed of their child's progress such as: regular test results, the Provincial Report Card, EQAO results, and regular meetings with teachers to discuss and review a child's progress.

**What does it mean when the "IEP" box is checked on my child's report card?**

The IEP box is checked when the mark for a particular subject/course is based on learning expectations outlined in the IEP.

**Why isn't the "IEP" box checked when it is clear my child has special needs?**

The IEP box is only checked when the mark for a particular subject/course is based on learning expectations outlined in the IEP. A student with special needs who, for example, only needs accommodation such as assistive devices and other supports in a regular program will not have the "IEP" box checked.

**Do I have a say in how my child's learning will be evaluated?**

Parents are encouraged to participate in their child's learning and to share any information that would assist in decision making relating to their child's learning at the school. Parents have a right to request regular meetings with school staff and with the classroom teacher to express any concerns they might have about their child's learning, assessments and evaluations. Information on Provincial Report Cards can be accessed at: <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/nr/09.12/faqs.html>  
[https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/forms/report/card/HS\\_NonSemester\\_Final.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/forms/report/card/HS_NonSemester_Final.pdf)

**What are EQAO assessments**

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics at key points in their elementary and secondary school education. Students attending Ontario's publicly funded schools are expected to participate in the assessments. Assessments are administered as follows:

- Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Primary Division – administered at the end of grade 3.
- Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Junior Division – administered at the end of grade 6.
- Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics – students in applied and academic math programs write the assessment either in January or in June.
- Ontario Secondary School Literacy test (OSSLT) – administered in grade 10 and required for all students working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

All assessments are based on the Ontario Curriculum and assess student achievement in relation to the provincial standard.

*A Parent's Guide to EQAO Tests* provides detailed information on EQAO assessments and can be accessed at: [https://www.eqao.com/pdf\\_e/07/07P086e.pdf](https://www.eqao.com/pdf_e/07/07P086e.pdf)

### **Does my child have to write the EQAO test?**

Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability Act states that all students in publicly funded schools must participate in these tests. Students do not need to study for these tests as the tests are intended to demonstrate what students already know. Students with special education needs and receiving special education programs and services are expected to participate in the EQAO assessments. There are some circumstances where students with special education needs will participate in the assessments with accommodations and some limited cases where the student may be exempted from all or part of the tests. Further information on exemptions can be found at:

[https://www.eqao.com/pdf\\_e/09/Sacg\\_Xe\\_0409\\_web.pdf](https://www.eqao.com/pdf_e/09/Sacg_Xe_0409_web.pdf)

### **Can my child receive accommodations for the EQAO assessments**

If your child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for classroom tests and assessments, he/she may be able to get an accommodation for writing the EQAO assessments. All EQAO assessments allow for a student to receive accommodations. However the specific accommodations that are permitted may be different for each assessment. Parents should talk to the school principal and/or teacher-adviser concerning their child's accommodation needs in advance of him/her writing the EQAO assessment,

For Questions and Answers for parents, please visit:

<https://www.eqao.com/Parents/FAQ.aspx?Lang=E&gr=036> or contact the EQAO office at:

Education Quality and Accountability Office

Suite 1200, 2 Carlton Street, Toronto ON M5B 2M9 Telephone: 1-888-327-7377 • Fax: 416 325-0831

[www.eqao.com](http://www.eqao.com)

### **Questions Parents May Have About IEPs**

Parents are invited to access the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) website where a guide to the IEP process for parents and students has been posted. The website contains the answers to all of the following questions and more. There are two chapters written specifically for students. The website can be found at <https://www.ldao.ca/introduction-to-ldsadhd/ldsadhs-in-depth/articles/about-education/a-parents-guide-to-the-iprc-and-iep/>

### **What is an IEP – Individual Education Plan?**

The IEP is a written plan describing the special education programs and/or services required by a student. It must also include the specific educational expectations for the student and a statement of the methods by which the student's progress will be reviewed. It is also an accountability tool for the student, the parent and everyone else who has responsibilities under the plan.

### **Does my child have to have an IEP?**

Every student identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) must have an IEP. An IEP may also be developed for other students who require special education programs and/or services.

### **What if I want my child to have an IEP but the school doesn't think it is necessary?**

You should speak with your child's teacher(s) explaining the reasons why you think an IEP would be beneficial and share any relevant reports, assessments or other information that would be helpful in planning your child's program. The decision to develop an IEP will be made by the school principal in consultation with you and your child's teacher(s).

### **Do I have the right to have input into my child's IEP?**

You should be a contributor to this process by sharing any relevant information that will support the development of the IEP. In this way, you will understand what you will be asked to sign and also be aware as changes are requested and/or made to the IEP.

### **Who has the final say about what is included or left out of an IEP?**

The most effective IEPs are developed with a team approach bringing together everyone who has a role to play in sharing information that will support the development of the IEP. The IEP is signed by the school principal and he/she is responsible for its implementation. Therefore the principal has the final say.

### **What are the rules about IEPs?**

Regulation 181/98 sets out the IPRC process. An IEP is required for all students identified as exceptional by an IPRC, and the requirements respecting IEPs are also contained in this regulation. The ministry has provided a number of documents to support the IEP process. Links are listed here:

*Individual Education Plans, Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation (2000)*  
<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/iep/iep.html>

*The Individual Education Plan (IEP), A Resource Guide (2004)*  
<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/index.html>

### **Questions Parents May Have When a Child is Changing Schools within the Board**

### **Will the new school be informed about my child's special needs?**

At the time when you register your child in a new school, it is important that you share information with the school principal about the special needs of your child.

### **Does the new school have to accept assessments that were done by the other school?**

If your child has been identified by an IPRC (Identification, Placement and Review Committee), the receiving school accepts this information. If assessments have been completed at the previous school but no decision was made regarding a special education program, the receiving school will take this information into consideration in making decisions about the next steps required in meeting the needs of your child.

### **Does the new school have to accept my child's identification as "an exceptional pupil" as decided by an IPRC (Identification, Placement and Review Committee)?**

The new school accepts the decision of the IPRC, until such time as that decision is changed by a further IPRC. When you register your child in the new school, you should speak with the school principal about your child's identification as "an exceptional pupil". If you have concerns regarding the identification or placement of your child you should speak with the school principal.

### **Who is responsible for planning related to the change of schools?**

Parents are responsible for registering their child in a new school. As a parent you will want to describe the special needs of your child and participate in any case conference for your child. The principal of the new school is responsible for ensuring that planning is in place related to meeting the special education needs of your child. The principal involves the parents, system-level personnel and community partners in implementing a system-level plan for your child; gathers all necessary information, coordinates a case conference for your child who has special education needs, coordinates an orientation for your child, and, monitors any issues that are raised in the process.

### **Do I have a say in the plan?**

If your child is receiving a special education program in a new school, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be developed for your child. Parents will be invited to help develop the IEP. Other people who have expertise may also be involved in developing the IEP.

For more information on special education programs and services, <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html>

### **Questions Parents May Have About Planning for a Child to Leave School**

#### **Does my child have to have a transition plan?**

School principals are required to ensure that a transition plan is prepared, as part of the Individual Education Plan, for each exceptional student who is 14 years of age or older, unless the student is identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness.

#### **If my child is going on to College or University, do they have to accept assessments that were done by the school?**

All colleges and universities are autonomous institutions and therefore establish their own criteria for the assessment of a student's accommodations. Please contact the Office for Special Needs at the institution your child is interested in attending to determine individual requirements.

**Do Colleges or Universities have to accept my child's identification as "an exceptional pupil" as decided by an IPRC (Identification, Placement and Review Committee)?**

No, they do not, since the IPRC decision is valid only in the school board which made the decision. However, the IPRC information, and any other assessment information, is valuable and should be shared with the Office for Special Needs at the institution your child is interested in attending to aid in the assessment of individual student strengths and needs.

**Who is responsible for planning related to leaving school?**

As part of the IEP, the teacher, student and parents all have an integral part in the planning for leaving school. In addition however, there may be many others who can play a positive role in planning for a transition to a post-secondary institution, such as secondary school guidance services and offices for special needs at the post-secondary level.

**When will planning begin?**

There is no predetermined time to begin this process. However, the earlier relevant assessment information can be shared with the office of special needs the better the chance that appropriate accommodations will in place at the beginning of the school year.

**Do I have a say in the transition plan?**

From the age of 16, the individual student may choose who will contribute to their transition plan.

For more information on transition planning please refer to the following document: <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/transiti/transition.html>

**Keeping kids in school: Lessons from research about preventing dropouts**

In recent years, states have focused much attention on student achievement, but little on how many students ultimately leave school with a diploma in hand. This is changing: Nearly every governor has pledged to develop tougher ways to measure graduation rates at the same time that the No Child Left Behind Act has begun requiring states to hold schools and districts accountable for the results.

Of course, one prerequisite for shepherding more students successfully to graduation means keeping them in school in the first place.

Fortunately, research offers important lessons for districts that decide to tackle the dropout problem head on. We now know a surprising amount about how to identify potential dropouts, and how to keep students in school and on track to graduate. Districts should pay close attention to these lessons when

developing plans to raise graduation rates. Plans that are most likely to be effective are comprehensive and address the following major components:

- **Prediction:** Processes for identifying students early on who are in danger of dropping out.
- **Intervention:** Programs and initiatives to help high-risk students get back on track.
- **Prevention:** Ways to organize school programs that will minimize the chances a student will become at risk of dropping out.
- **Recovery:** Options for keeping older students in the pipeline when intervention and prevention are not enough.

### **Prediction: How to identify students who are likely to drop out**

Most students who drop out leave school because of bad experiences in school. Dropouts are twice as likely to say they left for school-related reasons as for family or personal circumstances (Berkthold et al. 1998), something that holds true for all demographic subgroups (Jordan et al. 1999). To identify students at risk of dropping out, schools should look for those with weak grades in core subjects, poor attendance, and little involvement in school. These factors better predict who will drop out than such characteristics as race, poverty, gender, or family background (Neild and Balfanz 2006).

Districts can identify a majority of eventual dropouts?up to 85 percent?by ninth grade, and many well before that. Researchers working in Philadelphia can identify fifty percent of eventual dropouts as early as sixth grade and an additional thirty percent by ninth grade (Neild and Balfanz 2006). Researchers in Chicago have created an “on track” indicator that predicts with eighty-five percent accuracy which ninth graders will not make it to graduation (Allensworth and Easton 2005 ). Investing in data and good prediction up front can save districts a great deal of money in the short-term and garner better results in the long run (Jerald 2006).

Schools need to pay close attention to the transition grades. Students who drop out often struggle making the shift from elementary to middle school, or middle to high school. Even students who showed no warning signs in earlier grades can suddenly see their classroom grades or their engagement in school drop off during sixth and ninth grades, putting them seriously at risk. (Roderick 1993, Neild and Balfanz 2006, Allensworth and Easton 2005). Allensworth notes that ninth grade absences are twenty times more predictive of eventual graduation than eighth grade test scores (Education Week 2006).

### **Intervention: What to do for high-risk students once they’re identified**

Ongoing, comprehensive, and personalized attention from counselors can reduce dropout rates even for the most at-risk students. Rigorous experimental studies have shown that programs like Check & Connect (<https://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect/>), that provide intensive, sustained, comprehensive, and coordinated interventions can reduce four-year high school dropout rates among highly at-risk students by one-third, and five-year rates by one-half (Sinclair et al. 1998, Sinclair et al. 2005). Programs that work use counselors as case managers who build sustained relationships with students, closely monitor each student’s attendance and performance, intervene rapidly at the first sign of trouble, help students and families overcome obstacles to educational success, and teach students how to solve problems.

Low-intensity programs that provide occasional tutoring, counseling, or activities to boost self-esteem do almost nothing to keep students in school. In a rigorous experimental evaluation of the federal School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program, middle school interventions that provided low-intensity supplemental services such as tutoring, counseling, or workshops to enhance self-esteem or leadership skills had no impact on dropout rates (Dynarski and Gleason 1998). However, students in two alternative middle schools completed more credits and were only half as likely to drop out.

### **Prevention: How schools can minimize risk factors**

Better preparation in lower grades helps get students on track for high school graduation, but what they encounter in their high school makes a difference, too. K-8 reforms in Chicago during the 1990s improved reading and math achievement, which subsequently helped raise graduation rates (Roderick 2006, Allensworth 2004). However, about one in four freshmen who enter Chicago high schools with high eighth grade test scores (in the top quarter) fall off track during ninth grade, and only about one-third of those students recover to graduate on time (Allensworth and Easton 2005).

Size matters. So do relationships and curriculum. Some high schools have better “holding power” than others with similar students. Students who attend high schools that have smaller enrollments; better interpersonal relationships among students and adults; teachers who are supportive of students; and a focused, rigorous, and relevant curriculum drop out at lower rates (DeLuca and Rosenbaum 2000, Croninger and Lee 2001, Lee and Burkam 2003, Plank et al. 2005). Providing more support to ninth graders via interdisciplinary teaching teams or small learning communities (often called “academies”) can reduce dropout rates (Kerr and Legters 2004).

Some high school reform models can help students stay in school. Career Academies (<https://www.ncacinc.org/ncacinc/site/default.asp>), small schools-within-schools that combine challenging academics with career and technical training, reduce four-year dropout rates by one-third (Kemple and Snipes 2000). Talent Development high schools (<https://www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs/>) employ a ninth-grade Success Academy that provides intensive social support and academic support (doubling the amount of math and reading to help students get caught up). In Philadelphia, a group of neighborhood high schools replicating Talent Development have seen substantial gains in attendance, academic credits earned, and promotion rates for several cohorts of ninth graders (Kemple et al. 2005).

### **Recovery: What to do when intervention and prevention aren't enough**

No set of strategies has yet proven 100 percent effective. Not all dropouts show early warning signs of being at risk. So far, researchers have been unable to reliably predict about fifteen percent to twenty percent of eventual dropouts in cities like Chicago and Philadelphia. For students who are identified, no intervention has demonstrated perfect success. Students who slip through the cracks tend to fall into two groups with different needs: Dropouts who had actually earned many of the credits they need to graduate, and teenagers who are overage for their grade level and behind in their credits.

Teenagers who “slip through the cracks” might benefit from “recovery” options tailored to their needs. An analysis conducted by New York City’s Office of Multiple Pathways found that the city’s alternative “Transfer High Schools” (<https://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/DYD/OMP/TransferHighSchools/default.htm>) have a graduation rate of fifty-six percent for overage, under-credited youth, compared with a districtwide rate of nineteen percent for similar students in regular high schools (Office of Multiple

Pathways 2006). However, more rigorous experimental studies of alternative high schools have yielded mixed results showing no impact for some schools and small impacts for others (Dynarski and Gleason 1998, Dynarski and Wood 1997), so more research in this area is definitely needed.

More reading: [Dropouts-Myths v Realities](#)

*This document was excerpted from a report written by Craig Jerald, president of Break the Curve Consulting, located in Washington, D.C. Jerald was previously a principal partner at the Education Trust, an advocacy and research organization, and a senior editor at Education Week. [The full document can be found here.](#)*