



TLDSB Parent/Guardian Guide to Special Education

2025-2026

**Revisions and updates current for the 2025-2026 school year
Trillium Lakelands District School Board**

If you require this information in an accessible format,
please contact Communications Services at info@tldsbc.on.ca

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The purpose of the *Parent/Guardian Guide to Special Education* is to provide parents, guardians, or caregivers with information about special education services within TLDSB and the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). The guide also sets out the procedures involved in identifying student exceptionalities to help determine their placement and support, or appealing such decisions.

My child has needs. How do I get help?

Who can access special education services in TLDSB?

All students in TLDSB have access to special education services and support.

Our focus is to provide highly responsive purposeful programming for all students to build success and to foster independence.

Is a formal identification or diagnosis required?

While the identification of a specific exceptionality or diagnosis may be helpful to provide additional information to your child's teacher, these are not necessary to gain access to special services or programs at school.

It is very useful for the school to have access to reports and recommendations as a result of any exceptionalities or diagnoses from outside sources so that we can design the best program for your child. We welcome you to share information about your child with us.

What is the process for accessing special education support?

A common process is followed for all students regardless of their needs, exceptionality, or diagnosis.

1. The process begins in the classroom with the teacher conducting assessments to understand your child's learning needs.
2. If specific learning needs are identified from the classroom assessments, the teacher will make a referral to the in-school team (elementary)/student success team (secondary) for further consultation. Adjustments will be made to in-class programming and a follow-up meeting will be set up to monitor whether the changes are having the intended positive impact.
3. If a pattern of sustained learning challenges is identified, the classroom teacher will work with the school's special education resource teacher (SERT) to possibly design or update an Individual Education Plan (IEP).
4. An IEP will identify accommodations, and in some cases specific program goals, to support your child.
5. Parents/guardians are an important part of this process and will be consulted for input throughout the development of the IEP and the programming.
6. The teacher and SERT may include or request specific resources or support for your child. These may include some of the following strategies to support learning:

- **Classroom programming:** Specific and timely adjustments to the programming are made in the classroom by the teacher.
- **Strategies:** Research-based and high-impact strategies are implemented relevant to the need.
- **Assistive technology:** Technology used to support learning.
- **Review of data and interpretation:** Collecting more specific data to further understand the strengths and needs of the student.
- **Programs:** Strategies from a specific program (Applied Behaviour Analysis, TLDSB system classes, etc.).
- **Resource interventions:** Specific and targeted interventions out of the classroom with the support of the SERT.
- **Central office support:** Support from board-level staff (consultants, assessment staff, itinerant teachers with expertise in a specific area, etc.).
- **Community partnerships:** Support from outside agencies (therapy, interventions, programming, medical reports, etc.).
- **Additional resources?** Other supports and resources as appropriate.

How will you meet my child's learning needs? What if they change?

As your child and the teacher work with the programming and the plan that is put in place, there will be a continual re-assessment of needs and progress toward goals.

As programming goals are reached, new goals are put in place. Reassessment of the supports and strategies used will determine what is working and how to adjust things to best support your child.

The Provincial Report Card, and in some cases, an Alternative Report Card, is used alongside the IEP to document your child's progress. Parents/guardians are encouraged to maintain contact with the classroom teacher to ensure they are always in touch with their child's progress.

Where can I find more information?

Additional information about TLDSB special education services can be found in the *TLDSB Special Education Plan* at <http://tldsb.ca/programs/special-education/> or by talking to the SERT or principal at your child's school.

School-to-home communications

Education is a shared experience involving the home and the school and it can be strengthened by open communication between the two.

What do I do if I need to discuss my child's learning with someone?

We welcome you to be in touch with the classroom teacher at any time about your child's learning needs.

Some suggestions for effective and meaningful conversations:

- Plan your approach.
- Gather your information.
- Be clear about the facts ahead of time.
- Organize what you want to highlight.
- Know what questions you want to ask.
- Focus on one or two issues at a time.
- Share information you feel is important about your child.
- Share information you have gathered from outside sources that may assist with programming decisions at school.
- Listen actively. Every person in the discussion has important information to share.
- Give some thought to the solutions you would like to see.
- Plan the next steps together.
- Take notes of discussion items and decisions made.
- Remember: Your input is important, but sometimes getting to the best solutions takes time.
- Keep in touch! Continuous communication is important.

Who should I talk to if I have questions, suggestions, or concerns?

Should a concern about your child's special education programming or experience arise, follow these steps:

First: If you have a question, concern or suggestion, contact the classroom teacher and discuss the situation; the classroom teacher may seek out support from the school SERT or central special education staff. Most questions, concerns or suggestions can be addressed via meaningful conversations with the school staff who regularly work with your child.

Then: If the situation has not been resolved, contact the principal and request help in dealing with the matter.

Then: If necessary, contact the superintendent in charge of the school involved. Call 1-888-526-5552 and ask for the superintendent for your child's school.

Then: If necessary, contact the director of education who is the chief executive officer at 1-888-526-5552.

Then: If necessary and if the situation has not been resolved, contact your local trustee.

In-school team/student success team process

The in-school team (elementary)/student success team (secondary) is a group of experts who brainstorm together to develop and plan for the best possible education for your child.

Step one: Identify the need

The classroom educator:

- Confers with parents/guardians, principal and other teachers
- Collects information to know more about the child's strengths and needs (e.g. diagnostic assessments, reviews documents from the OSR, observational records, etc.)

Step two: Determine next steps

If the classroom educator has enough information, they will:

- Plan and implement an appropriate responsive program to address the needs
- If programming is effective, progress will be monitored

OR

If the classroom educator needs additional support:

- The educator will make a referral to the in-school team (elementary)/student success team (secondary)

Step three: (If needed) schedule a meeting

In-school team (elementary)/student success team (secondary) meeting

- The in-school team (elementary)/student success team (secondary) includes teachers, principal, SERT or head of special education, and support staff
 - The referring educator defines the learning issue and provides background information
 - The group discussion involves brainstorming and selecting appropriate program and intervention strategies
 - An action plan is developed
 - Program suggestions and interventions are documented
 - The plan is monitored for effectiveness

Step four: Follow up

Review the action plan and determine if the adjustments to programming have been effective

If the adjusted programming has been effective:

- Continue to monitor

OR

If the adjusted programming has not been effective:

- Brainstorm additional strategies
- Revise the action plan
- SERT/head of special education may contact the special education consultant for additional strategies and/or support

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

What is an IEP?

A document to meet your child's needs:

- The IEP is a written plan that communicates the strengths and special education needs of the student.
- The most important educational goals for the student, as determined by classroom assessments and in consultation with the parent/guardian, are included in the IEP.
- It is a written commitment that records the learning expectations for the student and documents how the educators will meet the student's needs at school.

A document that changes with your child:

- The IEP is a living document that is continually reviewed, updated, and changed based upon your child's progress toward the learning goals and expectations within.

How does my child get an IEP?

An IEP is responsive to student needs. IEPs can be developed as a result of any of the following:

- Specific learning needs are identified in the classroom by the classroom teacher or SERT.
- Classroom assessments are completed by the classroom teacher or SERT.
- Formal assessments completed within the Board or by a community partner or private practitioner
- In-school team (elementary)/student success team (secondary) meetings to discuss learning profile and instructional strategies.
- Discussions with parents/guardians and others regarding the learning needs of the child
- In response to other factors.

What will I find in an IEP?

- A list of your child's strengths and needs
- Assessment data
- Accommodations
- Program modifications and alternative programs, where required

- Your child's current level of achievement in each program area
- Goals and specific expectations for your child
- Instructional strategies
- Assessment strategies that will be used to monitor your child's achievement and progress towards goals
- List of essential special education equipment if it has been purchased for your child's use
- Transition planning between tasks, between classes, between grades, between schools, after graduation, as appropriate to the student
- Medical or health supports that are required

What is the difference between an accommodation and a modification?

Accommodations are special teaching and assessment strategies, education supports, and/or special equipment for learning that are required to enable a student to learn and to demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not alter the Ontario curriculum expectations for the grade.

Modifications are changes made to grade-level curriculum expectations for a subject or course that are necessary to meet the student's learning needs. Sometimes a modification is made so that the curriculum expectations for the grade are decreased in number or complexity. At other times, the student is working towards curriculum expectations for a different grade level.

TLDSB IEP process checklist

The principal assigns the classroom teacher the responsibility for coordinating the development, implementation, and monitoring of the student's IEP.

Gather information

- Review the student's OSR (including the previous IEP, the IPRC statement of decision, and any relevant assessments).
- Consult with the student, parents/guardians, school staff, and other professionals.
- Gather information through observation of the student.
- Conduct further assessments, if necessary.
- Consolidate and record information.

Set the direction

- Establish a collaborative approach (including the student and parents/guardians).
- Establish roles and responsibilities.
- Begin work on the IEP (e.g. record the reason for the IEP, record personal information, list relevant assessment data).
- Indicate the student's strengths and needs on the IEP (as identified in the IPRC's statement of decision, where applicable).

Develop the IEP

- Incorporate program suggestions from the IPRC or [Special Education Tribunal](#) (if applicable).

- Incorporate applied behaviour analysis (ABA) methods into the IEPs of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), where appropriate.
- Record decisions about program exceptions, course substitutions, and eligibility for a diploma or certificate.
- Determine, for every subject or course, the program option that will best suit the student's needs (e.g., whether the student requires accommodations only or accommodations and modifications) and decide whether alternative programs are needed.
- Determine accommodations; only record subjects or courses in which the student is to be provided with accommodations.
- Plan and document subjects or courses with modified expectations.
- Plan and document alternative programs or courses.
- Determine and record teaching strategies and assessment methods for modified and alternative expectations.
- Plan for and document required human resources.
- Record information about individualized equipment.
- Record information about evaluation and reporting.
- Record information about provincial assessments.
- Develop a transition plan.
- Record details of parent/guardian and/or student consultations.
- Secure the principal's approval.

Implement the IEP

- Share the IEP with the student, parents/guardians, school staff, and other professionals (providing a copy to parents/guardians, and to the student if 16 or older).
- Put the IEP into practice (classroom/subject teachers and support personnel).
- Continuously assess the student's progress.
- Adjust the IEP as necessary (recording any changes in goals, expectations, teaching strategies, and other accommodations, etc.).
- Evaluate the student's learning and report the results of the evaluation to the student's parents.

Review and Update the IEP

- Update the learning expectations at the beginning of each reporting period or when expectations have been met, on the basis of the results of last period's assessments and/or evaluation.
- Review the IEP regularly, including the transition plan, and record revisions.
- Store the IEP in the documentation file of the Ontario Student Record (OSR).

Discontinuation of the IEP

Where students have achieved all learning goals outlined in their IEP, the document can be discontinued and filed in the student's OSR.

For more information about IEPs, please refer to, [The Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy and Resource Guide](#).

As a parent/guardian, how can I be involved in my child's IEP?

Working together

- Parents/guardians play a very important role in developing the IEP.
- Parents/guardians must be consulted by the school when the IEP is developed.
- Sometimes this consultation happens at a school meeting and other times there is a letter, email or telephone call asking for parent/guardian input.

Open Communication

- Open communication between home and school will ensure there is a shared understanding of your child's strengths and needs, and the special education program and services that are required and provided for the child.
- Parents/guardians are invited to share information about their child's strengths, interests and needs.
- Within the first 30 days of school, you will receive a copy of the current IEP. A copy of new IEPs will be provided to parents/guardians upon completion. Parents/guardians should also receive copies when there are changes to learning expectations and anytime there is an addition or deletion of a subject page.

If you are unsure, ask!

- Parents/guardians always have the right to ask questions about the IEP.
- Understanding the IEP will support continuity in educational programming, including reinforcement of goals at home.

Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

What is an IPRC?

The *Education Act* in Ontario requires school boards to provide special education programs and services for students who require them.

In accordance with Regulation 181/98, TLDSB has established Identification, Placement, and Review Committees (IPRCs) which follow a formal process to identify students who need special education programs and services.

It is important to note that TLDSB does not require an IPRC meeting for a student to access special education services and accommodations or to have an IEP.

The IPRC:

- A formal committee composed of at least three people. At least one person on the committee is a principal or supervisory officer.
- Decides whether a student should be identified as exceptional.
- Identifies the category and area of exceptionality.
- Decides on an appropriate placement for the student who is identified as exceptional.

- Reviews the identification and placement at least once in each school year unless this right is waived by the parent/guardian or adult student.

What happens before an IPRC meeting?

Referral to IPRC

- The school principal may refer your child to the IPRC if they would benefit from a special education program.
- You may also ask the principal to refer your child to the IPRC. This request must be made in writing. If you make a written request to the principal, the principal will respond to you within 15 days of receiving your letter with an indication of when the IPRC will meet.

Invitation to IPRC

- You will receive an invitation to the IPRC meeting.
- The invitation will include the date, time, and location of the meeting.
- Usually, IPRC meetings happen at your child's school.
- You will receive the invitation at least 10 days in advance of the IPRC.
- You will also receive a copy of this guide with your invitation.

Attendance at the IPRC Meeting

- If you are unable to attend the IPRC meeting, you are encouraged to contact the principal of your child's school to arrange an alternate date and time.
- Your involvement and participation are important at the IPRC.
- If you want the IPRC to meet without you, the principal will contact you following the meeting to let you know the IPRC's decisions regarding identification and placement.

What happens during an IPRC meeting?

Chair of Meeting

- Usually, the principal of the school will chair the IPRC meeting.
- The chair will start the meeting by welcoming you and making introductions.
- The chair will also explain the purpose and the agenda for the meeting.

Length and structure of Meeting

- Usually, IPRC meetings last about 15-30 minutes.
- Your input is very important at the IPRC meeting. For this reason, your attendance is strongly encouraged so that you can join into the discussion.
- The IPRC will:
 - Review all relevant information about your child, such as classroom assessments by the teacher.
 - Consider the results of speech and language assessments, psychological assessments, occupational therapy, physiotherapy assessments and medical information, if available.
 - Discuss your child's strengths and needs.

Identification and Placement

- Following discussions, the committee will then make a decision about identification and student placement.

Identification of exceptionalities

What does it mean that my child is ‘identified’?

- Identifying a student as exceptional through the IPRC process means that the student has a documented exceptionality that requires access to special education services to meet their needs.
- There are five categories of exceptionalities defined by the Ministry of Education for the purposes of identification through the IPRC process:
 - Behaviour
 - Communication:
 - Autism
 - Learning Disability
 - Language Impairment
 - Speech Impairment
 - Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 - Intellectual:
 - Developmental Disability
 - Mild Intellectual Disability
 - Gifted
 - Physical:
 - Blind Low Vision
 - Multiple Exceptionalities

Learn more about identified exceptionalities:

- TLDSB has developed a series of resources to support parents/guardians and community in better understanding support for specific exceptionalities and student needs in TLDSB
- Copies of these resources can be found online at <https://www.tldsb.ca/programs/special-education/> or by requesting hard copies from your child’s school.

Placement options

What will my child’s learning environment (‘placement’) look like once they are identified with an exceptionality?

There are five placement options that can be considered.

Before the IPRC can consider placing your child in a special education self-contained program it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services will:

- meet your child's needs; and,
- be consistent with your preferences.

If the committee decides that your child should be placed in a special education self-contained program, it must state the reasons for that decision in its written statement of decision.

Regular class with indirect support: The student is enrolled in a regular class for the entire day. The teacher receives consultative services from the Special Education team at the school and/or the Department of Specialized Services to support the student.

Regular class with resource support: The student is enrolled in a regular class and receives some specialized instruction by a qualified special education teacher. This specialized instruction may occur in the regular classroom or resource room.

Regular class with withdrawal support: The student is enrolled in a regular class and receives a significant amount of specialized instruction by a qualified special education teacher. This instruction often happens outside of the classroom for 50% of the day or less.

Special class with partial integration: The student is enrolled in a special education class for at least 50% of the day. The student is integrated into a regular class for at least one period each day.

Special class full time: The student is enrolled in a special education class for the full day.

Completing the IPRC process

You will be asked to sign a written statement of the IPRC's decision and indicate whether you agree or disagree with the decision. The statement of decision will:

- State whether the IPRC has decided to identify your child as exceptional;
- Specify the IPRC's decision regarding the category of exceptionality;
- List your child's strengths and needs;
- State the IPRC's placement decision; and
- State the reasons for any IPRC decision to place a student in a special education self-contained program; and
- List recommendations regarding a special education program and special education services, if applicable

What happens after an IPRC meeting?

Development or review of the IEP:

- In TLDSB, the IEP has usually been developed in advance of having an IPRC meeting.
- The school may review or revise your child's IEP within 30 days of the IPRC and or/a new placement.
- The purpose of reviewing the IEP is to ensure it is consistent with the child's learning needs and the IPRC decision.

What if I disagree with the IPRC decision?

- If parents/guardians disagree with the decision, you may ask to meet with the IPRC again.
- You must do so within 15 days of receiving the original IPRC decision.
- The purpose of this follow-up meeting is to review the decisions made by the IPRC in light of concerns you or your child feel if they are 16 years or older.
- The meeting will be held as soon as possible after the request has been received. At this meeting, you will be able to explain your concerns to the committee.
- The committee will carefully listen and try to resolve your concerns.
- The IPRC will decide whether to change its decision(s) or not while you are present. If you remain dissatisfied, you may appeal the decision(s) of the IPRC.

How do I appeal an IPRC decision?

If you or your child (16 or older) disagrees with the IPRC decision(s), you can:

- File a written notice of appeal to the director of education of Trillium Lakelands District School Board within 30 days of the original receipt of the IPRC's decisions; or
- File a written notice of appeal to the address below within 15 days of receiving the second IPRC meeting: Trillium Lakelands District School Board, 300 County Road 36, Lindsay, ON K9V 4R4

In your letter of appeal, you must state which of the IPRC decisions you are appealing and your reasons for disagreeing with the committee.

The appeal process involves the following steps:

- The Board will establish a Special Education Appeal Board (SEAB) to hear your appeal.
- The chair of the SEAB will arrange a meeting to take place at a convenient time and place, but no later than 30 days after they have been selected (unless parents/guardians and board both provide written consent to a later date).
- The SEAB will receive the material reviewed by the IPRC and may interview any persons who may be able to contribute information about the matter under appeal.
- You and your child, if they are 16 years old or over, are entitled to be present at, and to participate in, all discussions.
- The appeal board must make its recommendation within 3 days of the meeting ending. It may:
 - Agree with the IPRC and recommend that the decision be implemented; or
 - Disagree with the IPRC and make a recommendation to the board about your child's identification, placement or both.
- The appeal board will report its recommendations in writing, to you and to the school board, providing the reasons for its recommendations.
- Within 30 days of receiving the appeal board's written statement, the school board will decide what action it will take with respect to the recommendations (boards are not required to follow the appeal board recommendation).

You may accept the decision of the school board, or may appeal to a Special Education Tribunal.

Community resources for schools and families



Autism Ontario www.autismontario.com	Autism Ontario www.autismontario.com	Autism Ontario www.autismontario.com
Canadian Hearing Services www.chs.ca/	Community Living Trent Highlands www.clth.ca	Canadian Hearing Services – Peterborough www.chs.ca
Canadian National Institute for the Blind (Barrie Office) www.cnib.ca	Point in Time www.pointintime.ca	Canadian National Institute for the Blind (Peterborough Office) www.cnib.ca
Closing the Gap www.closingthegap.ca	Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario www.ldao.ca	Chimo Youth & Family Services www.chimoyouth.ca
Home and Community Care Support Services www.healthcareathome.ca	Home and Community Care Support Services www.healthcareathome.ca	Home and Community Care Support Services www.healthcareathome.ca
Community Living South Muskoka www.clsm.on.ca	Five Counties Children's Centre www.fivecounties.on.ca	Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario www.ldao.ca
Community Living Huntsville www.clhuntsville.ca		Five Counties Children's Centre www.fivecounties.on.ca
HANDS The Family Help Network www.thefamilyhelpnetwork.ca		Kinark Child and Family Services www.kinark.on.ca
Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario www.ldao.ca		Kerry's Place - East Region www.kerrysplace.org
One Kid's Place Children's Treatment Centre www.onekidsplace.ca		Canopy Support Services www.canopysupport.ca
Simcoe Muskoka Family Connections www.familyconnexions.ca		

TLDSB Specialized Services Acronyms

SERT	Special education resource teacher
CT	Classroom teacher
EA	Educational assistant
VP	Vice principal
IEP	Individual education plan
IPRC	Identification Placement and Review Committee
SEA equipment	Special Education Amount equipment (student equipment)
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Committee
SEAB	Special Education Appeal Board