

# Section G: EARLY IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

FEEDBACK

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## ***Purpose of the Standard***

*To provide details of the board's consultation process to the ministry and to the public*

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All children enter school capable, competent and ready to learn. Full day Kindergarten supports a strong two-year foundation for future learning. The TDSB is committed to creating Early Years learning environments where children feel a sense of joy, belonging and engagement, in spaces where they feel safe, are motivated to learn and are eager to be part of the school experience. The experiences and developments in the early years are broad and are situated in relationships and social competencies which are key aspects of programming in Kindergarten - Grade 2. As educators differentiate instruction in the early years, students should be able to access learning and experiences that are optimal for their own individual growth. In very few cases, Intensive Support Programs (ISPs) are available for students of the Kindergarten age who have complex needs.

## **Early and Ongoing Identification and Intervention**

Early and ongoing identification and intervention are recognized by the TDSB as contributing to the well-being of all children and to better outcomes for students. The standard of practice includes early identification of learning needs, use of appropriate teaching strategies, ongoing assessment and open communication with parents/guardians/caregivers and students. Following their registration in the TDSB, most children will attend the regular classroom in the neighbourhood school, where ongoing assessment and monitoring is a continuous process. Strategies to identify each student's level of development, learning abilities and areas for improvement are expected to be implemented in all classrooms. Through ongoing assessment, teachers are expected to identify areas of growth in a timely way and design educational programs to accommodate those needs while facilitating each student's growth and development.

As stated in Ministry of Education [Policy/Program Memorandum No. 11](#):

These procedures are a part of the continuous assessment and program planning process which should be initiated when a child is first enrolled in school and no later than the beginning of the program of studies immediately following Kindergarten and should continue throughout a child's school life.

TDSB procedures for early and ongoing identification:

- Comply with Ministry of Education PPM No.11 and the requirements of the TDSB Special Education Plan
- Ensure that schools are able to identify each student's level of development, learning abilities, and needs upon entering the TDSB
- Support successful transitions to school
- Enable teachers to use the information to plan appropriate instruction for all students
- Provide the starting point for ongoing identification and tracking of students at risk
- Provide relevant data related to student development and needs, which can be used to track students over time
- Provide schools with information to identify trends and patterns in the school community

The TDSB believes it is critical that early and ongoing identification and intervention strategies for students at risk be a priority in all grades, not just the primary grades, enabling the development and implementation of appropriate Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Plans when needed.

## **TDSB Developmental History Form**

[Operational Procedure PR 512](#) explains use of the TDSB [New Student Registration: Developmental History Form](#) in early identification, providing a system-wide process for gathering important information from parents/guardians/caregivers. The form is completed by parents/guardians/caregivers or can be completed with the assistance of school staff.

The school principal ensures there is a scheduled time for parents to meet with the child's teacher to discuss the kinds of information addressed in the Developmental History Form. Translators/communication facilitators are also arranged by the principal when needed.

Parents/guardians/caregivers are asked to share with the school their knowledge about their child's pre-school development, family background and health history. The information collected is used by teachers to support program planning when students first enter school (up to and including Grade 2). The Developmental History Form is filed in the child's OSR and the principal/vice-principal and child's teacher(s) have access to the information in the form. The principal is expected to ensure that school staff review the information and use it to support the learning needs of students.

When completing the form or meeting with the teacher, parents/guardians/caregivers may indicate that their child has special education needs and they are encouraged to share any pertinent documents or assessments from doctors and other professionals. This requires an Informed [Consent for the Release of Confidential Information Form](#) signed by parents/guardians/caregivers.

## Transition Planning for School Entry

At any grade level, some students with special education needs may require transition planning prior to school entry or before attending a new school. Transition planning generally involves the principal or a designate, the teacher, special education staff and the parents/guardians/caregivers. It may require involvement of the School Support Team (SST) to determine the kinds of supports a student will need on entering school. If appropriate, other Board professional staff and agency personnel may be consulted.

Transition planning occurs for a child who is:

- Receiving service through Preschool Initiative programs
- Receiving specialized support in a preschool childcare, nursery school, hospital program, at home, or through private consultants
- Returning from a specialized placement, such as a diagnostic setting
- Exiting an Intensive Behaviour Intervention Program (IBI) to enter full time school (Connections Initiative)

A Transition Plan may recommend the development of an Individual Education Plan (IEP). It may recommend referral to the School Support Team (SST) to consider the student's needs. The SST has access to TDSB Professional Support Services staff to assist the teacher in successfully programming for a student with special education needs and for determining appropriate next steps.

A child who requires a school-entry Transition Plan will be monitored through a school team process involving the In-School Team (IST) and/or School Support Team (SST). A child may also be referred to the IST or SST based on information in the Developmental History Form. The school teams may:

- Recommend strategies for in-class and/or home support
- Develop a plan for in-school support
- With parental permission, request additional information (e.g., assessments) from professional support services to clarify the child's strengths and areas of growth (SST only)
- Initiate the process for an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) meeting (SST only)

For a small number of eligible students who are registered but not yet attending a TDSB school and present with extremely complex and/or medical needs, the SST may request a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) meeting. If parents/guardians/caregivers are in agreement, a SEPRC recommendation can facilitate placement in a full-time special education class designed to address more complex needs.

### **Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC)**

A SEPRC is not a legal, provincially mandated process; it is unique to the TDSB. Only through a parent or legal guardian can a SEPRC be requested, and only if the student profile meets the criteria stated below will the SEPRC process be followed.

The Toronto District School Board is committed to providing equity of access to learning with a timely admittance to school for students new to the Board and who fall within the TDSB Low Incidence category of developmental disabilities, physical disabilities including blind/low vision and deaf /hard of hearing. Students new to the TDSB with extremely complex medical needs may be considered for immediate placement in an Intensive Support Program (ISP). Usually, these are students who have been receiving intensive, full-time special education class support in other school systems including out of province, or specialized preschool/daycare prior to their arrival in the TDSB. This includes students who have complex medical needs which may include a combination of intellectual communication and/or behavioural needs, including persistent challenges in daily living. This also includes students in need of care, treatment or rehabilitation through Education and Community Partnership Programs (ECP).

The student learning profile for a SEPRC suggests that the student requires access to specialized equipment and specialized support whereby the home school will not be able to adequately address the student's complex medical and/or Low Incidence needs even for a short period of time. The SEPRC process will assist in fast tracking the student into the appropriate class and/or school.

If the student profile does not meet the criteria, the student will be welcomed by and registered at their homeschool.

# Entry Plan for Students with Special Education Needs

## **New students entering Kindergarten and SEPRC**

All new students entering Kindergarten are encouraged to register at their homeschool. However, in addition to SEPRC requests from the parent or legal guardian, and ensuring the student profile is within the criteria stated above, only if the new JK/SK student is enrolled in a specialized preschool/daycare or The Hospital for Sick Children or Holland Bloorview Hospital-Support Kids Rehabilitation or if the student is receiving intensive support that specifically addresses complex medical needs in another school system including out of province, will the SEPRC process be initiated. Students in this group should register 9-12 months in advance. This also includes students in need of care, treatment or rehabilitation through Education and Community Partnership Programs (ECP).

When students are new to Canada and are not affiliated with the supports listed above, the school will collect all medical documentation from the family and work with the Special Education and Inclusion Consultant to support as appropriate.

For new Kindergarten students who are not within the Low Incidence category or who do not have complex medical needs, the home school will welcome and register the student. The student will learn alongside their peers and access all learning opportunities. The student will be monitored and supported by the classroom teacher with on-going assessment and evaluation, and an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP) as per the Referral process, if required.

## **Students with exceptionalities who do not meet the SEPRC criteria**

For all new students whose families are requesting a SEPRC because their child has an exceptionality, schools will communicate the criteria for SEPRCs. Only if the student meets the SEPRC criteria stated above will a SEPRC be initiated. Students who do not meet the criteria stated above will be welcomed, and registered at their homeschool.

New students (K-12) with an exceptionality outside of the SEPRC criteria (e.g., Behavioural, Autism, Gifted, Mild Intellectual Disability) will be registered through the regular process at their home school and will be supported by the classroom teacher through on-going assessment and evaluation. Teachers will identify areas of the student's strength and growth and design an educational program incorporating Universal Design, and Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy to monitor a student's progress and development through an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Based on on-going assessment and evaluation and in collaboration with the principal, an IEP may be considered through the Referral Process.

An IPRC will take place only if the family is seeking an Intensive Support Program (ISP).

### **Student profile is within the SEPRC criteria, but homeschool is preferred**

When the student’s learning profile meets the criteria for a SEPRC as stated above, and the parent or legal guardian chooses to register at the home school and does not request a SEPRC, then the home school will welcome and register the child. The principal will collect supporting documentation of the child’s complex medical needs. The principal will contact the Special Education and Inclusion Consultant to ensure appropriate support is provided for classroom staff.

In collaboration with the Early Years Advisory Committee and the Child Care Committee, selected preschool programs and agencies serving students in the Low Incidence category including complex medical needs receive correspondence and presentations annually in January regarding the entry process for students new to TDSB. Principals are informed of this process. The selected preschool programs and agencies forward names of potential students to the Special Education Coordinators who then bring names forward to schools for a SEPRC.

Children who have attained the age of three years and who have a significant hearing loss, may qualify for a special education class placement in TDSB’s Deaf and Hard of Hearing preschool programs.

The chart below refers to the Entry Plan and Timelines for students who fall within the TDSB Low Incidence category of developmental disabilities, physical disabilities including blind/low vision and deaf /hard of hearing, including students with complex medical needs.

Entry Plan for Students with Special Education Needs	Person Responsible	Timeline
Presentations are made annually to outside agencies regarding the entry process for students new to TDSB.	Special Education Staff Professional Support Services	January
TDSB will send a letter regarding pre-registration to selected preschool programs serving students with special needs.	Special Education Staff	January
A letter will also be distributed through the Early Years Advisory Committee and the Child Care Committee. Principals will be informed.	Early Years Advisory Committee Child Care Committee	January
Preschool programs/agencies forward names of potential students to Special Education Coordinators.	Preschools /Agencies	Upon receipt of TDSB letter

Special Education Coordinators will notify TDSB schools of pending pre registrations.	Special Education Staff	Upon receipt of information
<b>Please note the following:</b>		
Children who have attained the age of three years and who have a significant hearing loss may qualify for a special education class placement in our Deaf and Hard of Hearing preschool programs.	Coordinator – Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Ongoing
Children who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder may receive additional transitional support (e.g., Connections for Students).	Coordinator – Autism Services	Ongoing

## Early Years Intervention Programs

Following through on its commitment to meet the needs of all students, the TDSB implements a needs-based delivery model within a full continuum of special education programs and services. Interventions are tiered, offering differing degrees and kinds of assistance to help students be more successful.

Full understanding of a student’s learning profile is necessary to determine appropriate programming and services to address learning needs. For all students, including students in Kindergarten, teachers collect information through classroom observation and assessment, a review of support strategies, and consultation with parents/guardians/caregivers and special education staff. With parental permission, information from professional assessments and/or community-based resource people is also reviewed. Teachers use this information to plan the best way to help students learn.

Interventions and their success are monitored by the classroom teacher, with consultative assistance available to every school. Teachers can consult their In-School Team (IST) for teaching and classroom management strategies to meet the needs of their students. For more complex or persistent issues, they can consult their School Support Team (SST) to access specialized consultation, action-planning, targeted intervention and staff coaching to meet a wide variety of student needs. Teachers are required to keep parents/guardians/caregivers informed about difficulties experienced by their child and the kinds of supportive interventions put in place.

There are three Early Years Intervention programs that are specific to student learning profiles. They include:

- Diagnostic Kindergarten Program (DK)
- JK/SK Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Co-enrollment Program
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Preschool Program

## Diagnostic Kindergarten (DK) Program

The Diagnostic Kindergarten (DK) Program is designed to provide careful planning and teaching of specifically targeted skills and alternative curriculum.

Students referred to Diagnostic Kindergarten are within the TDSB Low Incidence category of developmental disabilities and physical disabilities. This includes students who have complex medical and/or cognitive needs which may include a **combination** of intellectual, communication, and behavioural needs, including persistent challenges in daily living.

Diagnostic Kindergarten programs have one teacher, an educational assistant and a noon hour assistant. A partnership between Professional Support Services (PSS) and outside agencies is a valued component in the provision of support to staff and parents/guardians/caregivers. The DK class size is 8; however, enrolment may be impacted by students who are in partial attendance due to their participation in non-TDSB programs [e.g., Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI), medical treatment] or who are integrated for parts of the day in the regular kindergarten program.

Following placement in a DK program and prior to Grade 1, students are referred to an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) to determine if the student is an exceptional learner and to recommend the required supports for the upcoming school year.

### Eligibility for the Diagnostic Kindergarten (DK) Program

Kindergarten-aged students are offered placement in Diagnostic Kindergarten (DK) programs following either a decision by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) or, for students not yet attending a TDSB school, the recommendation of a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC). Only if the JK/SK student is within the TDSB Low Incidence category of developmental disabilities and physical disabilities, including students who have complex medical and/or cognitive needs which may include a **combination** of intellectual, communication, and behavioural, including persistent challenges in daily living, are they eligible for the DK program.



For DK placement consideration, an IPRC or SEPRC referral is completed and submitted by the school following the established TDSB processes and the following documentation must be provided:

- [Developmental History Form](#)
- At least two of the following:
  - Medical assessment/diagnosis
  - A developmental assessment
  - A psychological assessment
  - A comprehensive speech/language assessment
  - A current observational summary, which includes information around academic skills, activities of daily living, fine and gross motor skills and other relevant information

For students *not yet* attending school, a preschool/daycare report may also be included.

For students already attending school, the following are also required (as appropriate):

- Individual Learning Profile form indicating recommendation to go to IPRC
- Kindergarten Communication of Learning, if there has been a reporting period
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) if the student has been in school long enough for its development

### [Locations of Diagnostic Kindergarten Programs](#)

## **Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Co-enrollment and Preschool Programs**

The TDSB recognizes the importance of early intervention and can support students who require Deaf and Hard of Hearing support from the age of 3, through placement in a preschool class. Upon entry to school, students with Deaf and Hard of Hearing have access to the support of a Specialist Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. These itinerant teachers have specialized qualifications approved by the Ministry of Education that enable them to recommend the necessary accommodations and/or programming modifications to meet the educational needs of students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Based on student need, these teachers work closely with the TDSB Educational Audiologist to determine the appropriate FM technology that works with the student's Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT). When warranted, itinerant teachers facilitate access to the curriculum through direct instruction from Kindergarten to completion of secondary school.

The DHH Preschool is a half day morning or afternoon program capped at a class size of 8 students. The co-enrollment JK/SK program is a full day program similar to Kindergarten, capped at a class size of 8 students.

### **Eligibility for DHH Co-enrollment and Preschool Program**

Where more intensive support is required, placement in a Special Education Class may be the decision of the IPRC, based on the student's learning profile and severity of hearing loss. Typically, students who are eligible for Special Education Class placement with intensive program support for Deaf/Hard of Hearing students:

- Are identified with a Deaf and Hard of Hearing exceptionality due to a significant hearing loss, through a TDSB IPRC
- Are assessed as having expressive and receptive language delays due to a significant hearing loss, requiring modification and/or accommodations, instruction by a specialist teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and a smaller student teacher ratio