# 1. After School Skills Development Program

The Toronto District School Board has submitted an application to the Ministry of Education for an After School Skills Development Program. The name of the program is *At Home, At School and In the Community*.

The program’s target audience and eligibility criteria are as follows:

* Groups of 6-8 students with ASD and their school aged siblings
* Daycare provided for non-school aged children if necessary
* Students in Grades 6,7 and 8
* Diagnosis of ASD
* Through screening, student can identify 1-2 leisure activity of interest
* Parent must be willing to drive and attend accompanying session

# Program Details

The program offers simultaneous parent and student one hour sessions, once a week for a 6-8 week block.

* **Students:**
* Teaching individualized leisure/recreation activities to students based on a Motivation Assessment Scale and Family/Student interview
* Co-taught by “expert” in the leisure activity and supported by a teacher who reinforces ABA Instructional Methods throughout the session with students
* Invite siblings to attend to provide opportunity for family event
* **Parents:**
* To participate in simultaneous session that provides instruction in leisure activity that is being taught to child and strategies to practice the leisure activity at home and in the community
* Information provided regarding the benefits of leisure activity and how it supports their child’s strengths and challenges, i.e. reducing anxiety, overall health benefits, increasing opportunity for engagement in community over the child’s lifespan

# Program Goal

The goal of this program is to provide the following to our students, parents/guardians and staff:

* To provide weekly opportunity for students to develop confidence and independence in their choice of leisure skills in a safe environment
* To transfer the leisure skills learning to home, once a week
* As appropriate, to transfer the new skills to the community after the completion of the session
* To meet with other parents and discuss the importance of leisure skills for their children
* For parents to develop their own skills in the chosen leisure skills in order to successfully support their child in their skill development
* To organize the practice of the skill at home once during the week
* To provide staff with the opportunity to attend the sessions provided to the students and problem solve how to incorporate skills more fully into the student’s day and into the student’s Individual Education Plan

# 2. Early Development Instrument (EDI)

Toronto District School Board staff has been using Early Development Instrument (EDI) survey data to inform school and system planning for decades. The instrument measures the developmental well-being of students in five core areas of early child development that are known to be good predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes: Physical Health and Well-Being, Language and Cognitive Development, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity and Communication Skills and General Knowledge. We are pleased to share that the overall TDSB results of the 2015 administration of EDI show improvement in a number of areas!

In December, Research Services sent to principals, the latest EDI results for their schools. Although the data were based on the 2014-15 Senior Kindergarten cohort, the overall results should reflect the school readiness level of young children in our schools.

Principals use their school’s latest EDI results to inform their school’s goals in equity, well-being and/or achievement in the early years and primary levels. To support this endeavour, superintendents in Learning Centre 3 are offering two sessions to support school team understanding about the EDI, and to unpack the school’s data. Topics such as transitions to school, parent engagement in the early years and outdoor learning will be discussed.

# 3. Staff Professional Learning Opportunities

Special Education is supporting an initiative that will identify goals in the area of equity, well-being and achievement. The initiative will also foster skills needed to challenge “ableism” and anti-oppression issues in alignment with ‘A Vision for Learning in the TDSB’. Using technology-infused, inquiry-based processes, educators of students with Developmental Disabilities will have an opportunity to participate in job-embedded, collaborative, professional learning. Participants will expand their repertoire of skills and mentorship to promote student achievement, well-being and equitable opportunities in our schools and communities.

Modules of study will include “The Learning Environment” (focus on access and climate) and Assessment and Program Implementation (focus on pedagogy and content). Participants will also have opportunities to receive professional learning support based on the inquiry questions of the participants. Throughout the learning modules participants will journey through stages of inquiry based on a model of Collaborative Inquiry. Reference is made to five stages of learning: *Focus & Discuss, Share Documentation, Implement, Reflect & Wonder and Next Steps.* These stages will help guide practice to enhance student achievement, equity and well-being. (Refer to ‘A Vision for Learning in TDSB’, page 4-6).

Winter dates for Professional Learning sessions in Assistive Technology, hosted by the Special Education Department for January 10th to 25th, were released to the system. The Special Equipment Amount (SEA) Team continue to offer sessions in Boardmaker Studio, Clicker 6, Read & Write (Beginners and Advanced) and ActivInspire (Beginners and Next Steps). New courses have also been added:

* Using Switches to Support Students with Developmental and Physical Disabilities
* Using Digital Graphic Organizers to Support Students Across the Curriculum

# 4. Students with Special Needs: Management Process for Risk-Of-Injury Behaviour (PR699)

On January 2oth, we are running a.m. and p.m. sessions on PR699 for Principals and Vice-Principals in all Learning Centres (LC). There is also a session with LC3 Secondary Ps on Thursday this week. Several sessions on PR 699 and strategies related to working with students with behavioural needs are also being offered on January 20th for support staff (including lunchroom supervisors and noon-hour assistants). Topics being offered on the January 20th for support staff are:

* Positive Behaviour/Self-Regulation
* Functional Behaviour Analysis
* Meeting Various Needs in the Kindergarten Classroom
* Developing Independence for Students with Developmental Disability
* Read & Write Gold
* Board Maker Studio 2
* Behaviour Management Using ABC Logs
* Students With Special Needs: Management Process For Risk-of- Injury Behaviours (PR699)

Additional professional learning opportunities will be available for support staff on the June 9th Professional Activity day.

# 5. Universal Design for Learning

In partnership with the Teaching and Learning Department, Special Education and Section 23 will be facilitating two workshops that focus on Universal Design for Learning. The professional learning sessions will take place on February 17th for Secondary Teachers and February 21st for Elementary Teachers. These on-going sessions will emphasize that Universal Design is not just a technique for special education; rather it is a comprehensive framework that responds to students strengths and needs.

# 6. Special Education Webinar with Director John Malloy and Executive Superintendent of Special Education and Section Programs

Our District is committed to ensuring that students with special education needs will learn in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Join us on **Thursday, February 2, 2017** from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. for a live webcast on Special Education, with Director John Malloy and the Executive Superintendent of Special Education & Section Programs, Uton Robinson.

# 7. Special Education – Staff Allocation Process

Each year, between November and the middle of March, Special Education undertakes the alignment of special education resources with the wide range of student special needs across the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Alignment decisions are made in the form of programs, supported by the allocation of staff who will work within those programs. Allocation requirements are determined through decisions by Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs), recommendations from Special Education Program Recommendation Committees (SEPRCs), and needs assessment resulting from the work of School Support Teams and Individual Education Plans.

The staff allocation process involves special education central staff, the Planning Department, Superintendents of Education and administrative staff responsible for schools. The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is invited to provide input on directions they would like to see taken and the input is taken into consideration during the staff allocation planning meetings. SEAC may also make motions to the board with recommendations regarding staff allocation decisions the board may choose to make.

The following steps are taken by central and regional staff during the allocation process:

* Review of the current delivery model and staff allocation by exceptionalities
* Review of enrolment trends over the previous 5 years and projection of closures based on that analysis
* Adjustment of the previous year’s ‘*Potential Targets and Standards*’ criteria, for improved program support where possible and consistent program staffing across the system
* Projection by Exceptionality teams of the level of student need for special education class placement across system and development of a model of staff allocation
* Review of the model by Regional teams to ensure that there were no gaps in special education class offerings
* Sharing of special education class requirements with Superintendents of Education and confirmation of numbers and sites
* Special Education staff allocation for the programs, using allocation criteria and the *Potential Targets and Standards* criteria

During January and February, central special education staff members consult with superintendents of education who, in turn, confer with their principals to determine appropriate sites for special education programs.

### Opening a Full Time Special Education Class (ISP) in a School

New programs are opened in schools for the following reasons:

* There are a number of students close to the school who require the program
* Access to this program has never been available to parents in their area or region
* Space is available to accommodate the program and any future growth
* There are supports within the school, which will benefit the students and staff in the ISP (e.g., it is beneficial to cluster two or more ISPs with the same exceptionality in the school to facilitate divisional transitions for students and staff collaboration )

If a new program is being created at a school, the principal will be told the name of the program and the type and number of staff that will be allocated to the program. The names of staff who will be working within the program will *not* be available until staffing models are completed, current staff members are given assignments for the following year, surplus staff is placed and/or vacancies are advertised and filled. Principals know the dates when they can advertise and interview for positions and can share them with parents.

### Moving a Full Time Special Education Class

Programs are moved because:

* There are no longer enough students requiring an ISP in that area to sustain the program
* Preference is given to clustering two or more ISPs with the same exceptionality within a school so that staff can work collaboratively
* A TDSB Area Review requires a reconfiguration of program locations

While the students who are still in the program may move with the program, they may not learn if they are moving with the program until offers of program placement and location are made during IPRC Reviews later in the year. (The Review IPRC may determine that they no longer need the program, or new programs may open up closer to their home school.)

Principals whose programs are moving are usually told in March where the program is moving, and they then inform parent(s)/guardian(s) of students in the program. They are also informed if they will be receiving a newly created program and about how many staff they will have in each program. Principals who are receiving a program inform their school community. Support staff who has worked in a program that is moving have the option of moving with the program. If they choose not to move with the program, then vacancies are filled through the processes contained in the collective agreement.

### Closing a Full Time Special Education Class

Programs are closed in a school because:

* There are no students or only one or two students, who require the program
* There are no new students who live close enough to fill the program
* An Area Review requires a reconfiguration of program locations

In most cases, the teachers and support staff who taught in the closed program are assigned to the school. The decision as to whether the staff who taught in the program will stay in the school depends on whether the school requires the same number of staff for the following year and the seniority of the staff in question. Principals know more about their overall staffing situation by mid-April.