

A Communication Guide for Parents/Caregivers

This guide has been developed to support parents/guardians/caregivers who may have questions about how to address learning, social, emotional or other concerns related to their children.

What do I do if I have concerns about my child's learning or development, or if my child has a disability, and/or I think my child may have special education needs?

- **If your child is already in a TDSB school:** Start by talking to the classroom teacher, special education teacher, or school staff. They know your child's strengths and needs at school and can start the [TDSB referral process](#) if needed. This process helps identify strategies and next steps to support your child. You will be invited to be part of these conversations.
- **If your child is new to the TDSB:** Contact your [local school](#) office to register. Bring any documents that might help the school understand your child's needs. Please see the [Registration Information link](#) for further details.

What is meant by Special Education?

As per the [Ontario Ministry of Education](#), special education supports include programs and services designed to meet students' individual needs. Special education programs support students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, autism and more. By law, all school boards must provide special education programs and/or services for students with special education needs.

How can my child access Special Education programs and services to support their needs?

Most students receive support in their neighborhood schools. However, some students with unique needs may benefit from additional support in a different setting to develop skills and reach their full potential. In education, unique needs are referred to and called "exceptionalities" or "identifications", and classroom setting or where they receive service is called "placement".

An "exceptional" student has significant needs (behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical, or multiple needs) that call for a special education program. The TDSB uses categories and definitions provided by the [Ministry of Education](#) to identify

exceptionalities. This identification happens during a meeting called the Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC). For more information, see the [Guide to IPRCs for Parents/Guardians/Caregivers](#).

What is a Special Education Program?

A Special Education Program is designed based on ongoing assessments and includes an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Please refer to the [Guide to IEPs for Parents/Guardians/Caregivers](#) for more information on IEPs. This plan has specific goals and details about the special education services your child needs. Programs may include:

- Support in a regular classroom
- Resource or withdrawal assistance
- Partially integrated or full-time special education classes

What Special Education Programs and Services are available?

The TDSB offers different types of support, whether in regular or intensive support classrooms, including:

- Indirect support in the regular classroom
- Resource assistance within the regular classroom
- Withdrawal assistance (elementary)
- Partially integrated special education classes
- Full-time special education classes

More details can be found in the [TDSB Special Education Plan](#).

What other supports are available to meet the needs of my child?

A variety of professionals and others work together to support your child's specific learning and well-being. Not all students will need or receive support from the same type of staff.

These professionals could include:

- Educational Assistants
- Special Needs Assistants
- Psychologists, Psycho-Educational Consultants, and Psychological Associates
- Audiologists

- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Orientation and Mobility Personnel
- Oral Interpreters (for deaf students)
- Sign Interpreters (for deaf students)
- Sign Language Facilitators
- Interveners (for deaf-blind students)
- Transcribers (for blind students)
- Occupational and Physical Therapists
- Child and Youth Workers
- Child and Youth Counselors
- Social Workers
- Behaviour Analysts (BA) and ABA Facilitators
- Special Education and Inclusion Coordinators
- Special Education and Inclusion Consultants
- Special Education and Inclusion Itinerant Teachers

Where are Special Education Programs located?

Here is a list of Intensive Support Programs (ISPs) offered across the TDSB and where they are located:

- [Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\) Programs Map](#)
- [Diagnostic Kindergarten \(DK\) Programs Map](#)
- [Developmental Disability \(DD\) Programs Map](#)
- [Mild Intellectual Disability \(MID\) Programs Map](#)
- [Learning Disability \(LD\) Programs Map](#)
- [Gifted Programs Map](#)
- [Deaf/Hard of Hearing \(DHH\) Programs Map](#)
- [Physical Disability \(PD\) Programs Map](#)
- [Behaviour \(BEH\) Programs Map](#)
- [Congregated Schools Map](#)

What if I have questions or concerns about my child's education?

If you have concerns, always start with the classroom teacher, special education teacher, or other school staff. If you need further support, talk to the principal. Please follow the steps outlined in the [TDSB Parent Concern Protocol](#).

How can I communicate concerns about my child's program or special education services?

You play an important role in your child's education. Here are some steps to address concerns:

- **Prepare:** Before meetings, think about key points and questions.
- **Share Information:** Let school staff know any details about your child that could help.
- **Collaborate:** Discuss solutions and work together on next steps.
- **Take Notes:** Write down important points and decisions made.

Remember, ongoing communication is key, and finding the right solution can take time. If you still have questions and concerns, please follow the steps outlined in the [TDSB Parent Concern Protocol](#) and the [Shared Solution Guide](#).

What if my concerns still haven't been addressed?

The TDSB wants to address your concerns quickly. Start by speaking with your child's teacher. If needed, reach out to the principal and then the school superintendent who will be able to address your concerns.