

# Section G: EARLY IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES



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

*To provide details of the board's early identification procedures and intervention strategies 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 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 Learning Plans (ILPs), 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 information provided 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 newly registered but not yet attending a TDSB school and have complex physical and/or medical disabilities as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC), the SST may request a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) meeting. If parents/legal guardians are in agreement, a SEPRC recommendation can facilitate placement in a timely manner in a full-time special education class designed to support students with more complex disability needs.

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

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) believes all students enter school capable, competent and ready to learn. As is set out in the Education Act, TDSB adheres to Regulation 181/98 which states that all students will be welcomed, registered and placed in their neighborhood school in a regular class when new to the school district. TDSB recognizes that there are some new students with complex disabilities and complex medical/physical/safety and/or complex special education needs whose needs cannot be met in a regular class for even a short period of time, as they require specialized equipment and/or a specialized placement.

The Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) protects students with disabilities from discrimination and harassment: “Disability covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and some not visible. A disability may have been present from birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. There are physical, mental and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, mental health disabilities and addictions, environmental sensitivities, and other conditions” (OHRC).

As part of the Duty to Accommodate, TDSB implements a process to specifically address timely entry to school for new students with complex disabilities and complex medical/physical/safety needs and/or complex special education needs. This process is called the Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC). The SEPRC is a TDSB-specific operational process that supports entry to school for students who are not yet students of the TDSB and who are within the low incidence disability classification. Students meeting the criteria for a SEPRC may also have a combination of intellectual communication and/or behavioural needs, including persistent challenges in daily living. They may also be students in need of care, treatment or rehabilitation through Education and Community Partnership Programs (ECPPs).

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.

All students who do not have complex medical/physical/safety needs and/or complex disabilities and as per Regulation 181/98, will begin in their homeschool in a regular class with support. For these students, teachers will design an educational program based on the student’s strengths and areas of growth by incorporating principles of

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) to monitor the students' progress and development through an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Based on on-going assessment and evaluation and in collaboration with the principal, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) may be considered through the Referral Process.

### **SEPRC Structure**

The SEPRC is made up of the following members:

- Principal (Chair) who is not associated with the student or the student's school
- Special Education and Inclusion Coordinator or centrally Assigned Principal
- Psychological Services Representative or Psychology Manager

### **SEPRC Steps**

Parents/legal guardians of a child with complex disabilities or with complex special education needs whose needs cannot be met in a regular class for even a short period of time as they require specialized equipment and/or a specialized placement seeking an Intensive Support Program (ISP) upon enrollment, pre-register the student in the home school by address. They share any educational, behavioural, medical/health (hearing, vision, physical, neurological), psychological, speech/language, occupational/physiotherapy assessments or other relevant documentation with the school principal. The principal will consult with the Special Education and Inclusion Consultant to determine whether the student meets the criteria for a SEPRC. Parents/legal guardians may decline a SEPRC, in which case their child will attend the homeschool.

The following steps are followed when initiating a SEPRC:

- The principal may request access to central resources for the purpose of carrying out an observation, gathering additional information about the child's needs, or clarifying existing documentation.
- The principal will complete and send the referral package in a timely manner to the Special Education and Inclusion Consultant only for students with complex disabilities or complex special education needs.
- Once the referral package is reviewed for eligibility and approved for a SEPRC by the Special Education and Inclusion Consultant and Coordinator, an invitation letter to a SEPRC meeting is prepared and sent to the parents/legal guardians/caregivers, and a copy is sent electronically to the home school principal.
- Parents/legal guardians return the response form to staff at their home school or confirm their attendance by telephone to staff at the home school, who then notifies the appropriate Special Education and Inclusion Coordinator.

- Parents/legal guardians receive a copy of all documentation to be considered at the SEPRC with the letter of invitation and a copy of the Parent's Guide to Special Education.

### **Documents Required for a SEPRC**

The documentation presented to the SEPRC mirrors that required for students who are presented to an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) seeking a similar placement, and may include:

- An educational assessment from their specialized preschool/daycare or other school
- The most recent Provincial Report Card (and where the most recent Report Card is the Progress Report Card, the previous Provincial Report Card is also included)
- An Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- A psychological assessment
- Other relevant professional assessments (e.g., speech- language, OT/PT, medical)
- A Developmental History Form (for Junior Kindergarten to Grade 2 aged students)
- A current professional observation/assessment
- Student work samples that reflect that the teacher's pedagogy is responsive to the child's identity and lived experiences and is culturally relevant (part of the school presentation)
- Any documents which the parents/legal guardians may deem relevant to a SEPRC

### **Attendance at and Presentations to a SEPRC**

Since students presented to a SEPRC are not yet TDSB students, parents/legal guardians **must** be in attendance for the SEPRC meeting to proceed:

- The principal from the referring school arranges for an interpreter to assist the parents/legal guardians when appropriate.
- An administrator from the referring school must attend to provide a general overview of the student's history and to understand the full context of the SEPRC discussion and recommendation to guide follow-up action at the school.
- The SEPRC Chair invites parents/legal guardians and any other attendees such as any resource staff currently involved with the student to attend the meeting in order to determine current strengths, needs, academic performance and presenting issues. Work samples, if available, are reviewed to provide a sense of the student's potential and performance in the current setting.

- Principals work with families to ensure they feel supported through this process by acknowledging and validating their voice, identity, lived experiences, culture and any concerns prior to attending the SEPRC. The Principal ensures that the parent or legal guardian fully understands all documentation, placement options and pathways that the SEPRC may lead to for their child.

### **Functions of the SEPRC**

As part of the TDSB duty to accommodate students with complex medical/physical/safety needs and/or complex disabilities as per the Ontario Human Rights Code, should a parent or legal guardian request an Intensive Support Program (ISP) when registering the new student to TDSB, a SEPRC is arranged to determine eligibility for a special education class placement of a pre-registered but not yet attending student in the TDSB, and to make a recommendation about such placement.

The SEPRC will:

- Determine whether the support available in a special education class would be appropriate for a student when starting to attend a TDSB school
- For programming purposes only, note whether the student meets the requirements for placement (an IPRC decision is required to formally identify a student as exceptional)
- Provide a written statement of recommendations outlining the student's strengths and areas of growth and any program/services recommendations of the SEPRC

### **Required Follow-Up to the SEPRC**

Where special education class placement has been recommended and accepted by parents/legal guardians, the student will be offered a placement and a visit will be arranged at the offered location.

Referral for a follow-up Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) meeting must be made at the school where the special education class (ISP) is located. The IPRC should be convened after the student has been in the ISP for a period of approximately 6 to 9 months and where possible before the end of the school year based on the timelines of the student's entry into the TDSB. An exception to the 6 to 9 month provision involves students in the Diagnostic Kindergarten (DK) Program. Students in Junior Kindergarten will have their program recommendation re-evaluated in the spring at a School Support Team (SST) meeting, to determine if the recommended full-time support should continue for senior kindergarten, and will have an IPRC during their final Kindergarten year in preparation for the primary division.

### **SEPRC Appeal Process**

There is no formal appeal process for SEPRC recommendations. The students under consideration are not yet attending school under the jurisdiction of the TDSB. The

SEPRC function does not provide a decision about exceptionality and can only make a recommendation about conditional placement in a special education class, requiring a follow-up IPRC (decisions of the IPRC can be appealed).

When the parents/legal guardians decide not to accept a SEPRC recommended placement or when special education class placement is not recommended by the SEPRC, the student will attend the neighbourhood school and is provided support through the school's special education resources. The nature of support will be determined through the school's IST (In-School Team) or SST (School Support Team) process.

Parents/legal guardians continue to have the right to request (in writing to the principal) that the student be considered for special education class placement by an IPRC.

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

When a parent or legal guardian of a student with complex disabilities and/or complex medical/physical/safety needs chooses to register at the home school and does not request a SEPRC for direct access to an Intensive Support Program (ISP), the home school will welcome and register the child in a regular class. The principal will collect supporting documentation of the child's complex disabilities and/or complex medical/physical/safety needs. The principal will contact the Special Education and Inclusion Consultant to ensure appropriate support is provided for the student and 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 (developmental disability, physical disability) receive correspondence and presentations annually in January regarding the entry process for students new to TDSB. Principals are informed of this process so they may share information with their communities. 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.

## **Entry Plan for Students with Special Education Needs**

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

All new students entering Kindergarten are to register at their homeschool. If a new Kindergarten student has complex disabilities and/or complex medical/physical/safety needs or is enrolled in a specialized preschool/daycare, The Hospital for Sick Children, Holland Bloorview Hospital-Support Kids Rehabilitation or if the student is receiving intensive support that specifically addresses complex disabilities and/or complex medical/physical/safety needs in another school system including out of province, the



SEPRC process may be initiated should the parent or legal guardian make the request. 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 (ECPP).

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 (developmental disability, physical disability) or who do not have complex disability needs, the home school will welcome and register the student. The student will access learning opportunities alongside their peers. 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. An IPRC will take place only if the family is seeking an Intensive Support Program (ISP).

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 and physical disabilities including blind/low vision and deaf /hard of hearing, and students with complex medical needs.

| <b>Entry Plan for Students with Special Education Needs</b>   | <b>Person Responsible</b>                                | <b>Timeline</b> |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Presentations are made annually to outside agencies regarding the entry process for students new to TDSB.               | Special Education Staff<br>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<br><br>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 programs 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 precise and personalized learning for students.

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/legal guardians 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:

- 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 disability category (developmental disabilities, 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 disability category (developmental disabilities, physical disabilities) and has 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. 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:

- Individual Learning Plan (ILP) 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 serve 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 needs have access to 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 Program 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:

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