

2026-2027 SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN



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Introduction

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) Special Education Plan shares how we support students with special education needs so they can learn, grow, and succeed. This plan reflects our Board’s mission, vision, and values, and our ongoing commitment to equity, inclusion, and human rights for all students.

The Special Education Plan is developed in accordance with the Ministry of Education’s requirements outlined in *Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2017*. It describes the programs, services, and supports available to students, and explains how decisions are made to meet individual learning needs.

HWDSB’s Special Education Plan follows all applicable legislation, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Ontario Education Act, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). These laws help ensure that students are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.

We believe that strong partnerships with families and caregivers are essential. Copies of this plan are available in alternate formats upon request. We welcome questions, feedback, and ideas from students, parents/guardians, caregivers, and community partners as we continue to build inclusive and supportive learning environments.

To contact us or share feedback, please visit: [Contact Us | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#)

MODEL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) approach to Special Education is guided by our Mission Statement:

Every student experiences a sense of belonging and engages in dynamic learning to reach their potential and build their own future.

When we say “every student,” we are making a commitment to recognize and respect each student’s individual identity, lived experiences, strengths, gifts, and learning needs. Our goal is to ensure that all students feel welcomed, valued, and supported in their learning.

The Special Education Plan reflects this commitment and is grounded in HWDSB’s guiding values. These values shape how we work alongside students, families, and school communities to create inclusive, caring, and responsive learning environments where students can thrive.

Compassion, Dignity, Trust and Joy.

HWDSB Strategic Directions are focused on improving outcomes for students, including those requiring special education programs and services, by focusing on the following priorities:

Upholding Human Rights, Safety & Well-Being

We will support all students and staff to feel safe and secure in our classrooms and school communities.

Providing Equitable Quality Education

We will offer equitable, quality educational opportunities to improve student engagement, learning and achievement for future-readiness.

Collaborating with Students, Families & Communities

We will build reciprocal relationships and partnerships to enhance access and engagement for students, families, and communities.

Building a Sustainable Education System

We will adapt to a rapidly changing world through responsible fiscal management, investing equitably in accessible and sustainable facilities, and supporting a robust workforce.

Reinforcing Indigenous Educational Wellness & Reconciliation

We will honour our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships among Indigenous Peoples and Treaty Partners, and by cultivating intergenerational healing and wellness in a restorative education system.

With a commitment to equity for all, Special Education, Inclusion and Equity Department continues its work to support the best outcomes for all students.

The work on equity for students requiring special education programs and services is brought to life through the following shared beliefs outlined by the Ministry of Education in *Learning For All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12*, 2013:

Our Shared Beliefs

- All students can succeed.
- Each student has his or her own unique patterns of learning.
- Successful instructional practices are founded on evidence-based research, tempered by experience.
- Universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students.
- Classroom teachers are the key educators for a student's literacy and numeracy development.
- Classroom teachers need the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports all students.
- Fairness is not sameness.

(Adapted from Education for All, K-6, pp. 4-5.)

Supporting Student Learning and Success

HWDSB is committed to helping every student learn and succeed. To do this, we use teaching strategies that are based on research and proven to support student learning. We also look closely at student learning information to better understand where some students may need additional support and how we can respond more effectively.

By reviewing this information, HWDSB can identify areas where learning gaps exist and develop strategies to better support students. This work helps ensure that supports are meaningful, and responsive to students' individual strengths and needs.

Many teaching strategies used in classrooms benefit all learners, including students who access special education programs and services. These strategies may include flexible teaching approaches, adapted materials, and additional supports that help students participate, learn, and feel confident at school.

Families and caregivers are important partners in this process. Working together helps ensure that students receive the right supports at the right time, so they can build skills, grow in confidence, and reach their full potential.

'Instruction that both responds to the characteristics of a diverse group of students and is precisely tailored to the unique strengths and needs of each student can be achieved using the principles and guidelines associated with three instructional approaches':

- *Universal Design for Learning (UDL),*
- *differentiated instruction, and*
- *the tiered approach to prevention and intervention (Learning For All, K-12, EDU).*

HWDSB is committed to equity in student outcomes by offering a wide range of special education programs and services. These supports are designed to meet the diverse strengths and needs of students and to help every learner succeed.

Support for students may include help within the classroom, support from itinerant (travelling) staff, short-term intervention services, and a range of placement options. Students may be supported in Regular Class settings, with or without additional assistance, or in a Special Education Class when this best meets their learning needs.

This range of programs and services allows HWDSB to provide the right support, at the right time, in the setting that best supports each student's learning and well-being.

What Does This Mean for Your Child?

This means that HWDSB works to determine the right supports to your child's strengths, gifts, and learning goals. Support can look different for each student and may change over time as needs change.

Your child may:

- Learn in a Regular Class, with supports or accommodations as needed
- Receive additional support from special education staff
- Access short-term interventions to build specific skills
- Receive support from itinerant staff who work with students across schools
- Learn in a Special Education Class if this setting best supports their learning and well-being

Families and caregivers are partners in this process. You will be involved in conversations and decisions about your child's learning and supports.

The goal is always to help your child feel a sense of belonging, experience success, and make progress toward their full potential.

2026–2027 HWDSB Special Education Plan

HWDSB works to meet the needs of all students who receive special education programs and services in an environment where they can learn and thrive. Whenever possible, this is done in ways that best support the student's learning, well-being, and sense of belonging, while also respecting family preferences.

In keeping with Ministry of Education direction, HWDSB's practice is to support students in their Regular Class at their home school whenever possible. With appropriate special education supports and services in place, many students are able to successfully learn within their grade classroom.

Placement and support decisions are made thoughtfully and may change over time, based on each student's individual strengths, needs, and progress. Families are included as partners in these conversations to help ensure the best outcomes for their child.

How Decisions Are Made

Decisions about special education programs, services, and placement are made through a collaborative and thoughtful process that focuses on your child's strengths, needs, and well-being.

In general, decisions are based on:

- Your child's learning strengths and areas of need
- Family voice and preferences
- Ongoing classroom observations and assessments
- Input from educators and, when appropriate, specialized staff
- Your child's progress over time

Families and caregivers are important partners in this process. You are invited to share your knowledge of your child, ask questions, and participate in discussions about supports and placement options.

When formal decisions are required, these may take place through processes such as the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

The goal is always to provide the most supportive and inclusive learning environment, with the understanding that supports and placements may change as your child grows and their needs evolve.

If you have questions at any time, school staff are available to talk through options and explain next steps.

Supporting students who require special education programs and services is an interdisciplinary effort that involves collaboration across multiple departments within HWDSB.

In addition to the Special Education Plan, HWDSB has multiple key Action Plans and Strategies that guide and enhance support for students:

To ensure that every student experiences a sense of belonging



IDENTIFICATION, PLACEMENT, AND REVIEW COMMITTEE (IPRC) PROCESS

During the 2025–2026 school year, staff updated the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process to better support families. This work focused on ensuring that family voices are central, and that processes are respectful, inclusive, and responsive to diverse cultural perspectives

All principals and vice-principals participated in professional learning to prepare for implementing this updated approach in the 2026–2027 school year.

Staff will also be updating student and family resources during the 2026–2027 school year to make information clearer and easier to access. In addition, staff are redesigning the Entry to School process to better support students and families as they begin school

HWDSB adheres to Regulation 181/98 of the Education Act and has established practices to reflect this regulation. This regulation outlines the responsibilities of the Board in identifying and placing students who have been identified as exceptional through an IPRC.

IPRC Referrals, Reviews and Appeals

The following referrals, reviews and appeals have taken place in HWDSB as of June 2026, from September 2025-June 2026

	Behaviour	Communication	Intellectual	Physical	Multiple	Total
New IPRCs	1	449	203	5	5	663
IPRC Reviews	4	2471	1464	48	61	4048
Appeals	0	0	0	0	0	0

New IPRCs – first IPRC for students where:

- The student may be identified as exceptional according to Ministry categories
- The committee decides on placement (if exceptional)

IPRC Reviews – an annual process to review the last IPRC decisions. At this meeting the committee will:

- Review the student’s progress, gifts and current needs
- Confirm or change the student’s exceptionality identification
- Confirm or change the student’s placement
- Consider updated information (Parent/guardian input, assessment data, reports)

Parents/guardians may request this sooner than one year and may waive the annual review in writing if no changes are needed.

Appeals – Parents/guardians can request an appeal if they disagree with:

- The child’s exceptionality (identification)
- The child’s placement

Prior to the IPRC being convened, parent/guardian will receive a copy of the HWDSB Guide for Parents and Guardians to the Identification, Placement and Review Committee.

[Special Education | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#) which outlines the IPRC process in detail.

This guide includes in-depth information about the IPRC process, names and addresses of provincial and demonstration schools and a list of local associations that are on the Special Education Advisory Committee ([SEAC](#)).

An Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) is a group set up by every school board in Ontario, as required by the Education Act, Regulation 181/98. The IPRC’s role is to help ensure that students with special education needs receive the support they need to succeed.

Referral to an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)

A school principal may refer a student to an IPRC if they and the student’s teacher(s) feel the child may benefit from a special education program. When this happens, parents/guardians will receive a letter informing them of the referral.

Parents/guardians can also request an IPRC meeting at any time if they believe it would be helpful. This can be done by writing a letter to the school principal.

Note:

- An IPRC is not required for a student to receive special education support or an IEP
- Many students receive support without going through an IPRC
- The goal is always to ensure the student is supported, included, and able to succeed

Within 15 days of either the referral or receiving a written request, the principal will:

- Acknowledge the request in writing
- Provide an approximate date for the IPRC meeting
- Parents/guardians will also receive the HWDSB Guide to the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee, available on the HWDSB website, in an accessible format.

[Special Education | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#)

Gathering Information

Once an IPRC meeting is planned, the school collects information to help the committee make informed decisions. This may include:

- The student’s educational history
- An Individual Education Plan (IEP), if one exists
- Past IPRC or school team meeting information
- A parent/guardian input form
- Medical or outside agency reports (if available)
- Standardized assessment results
- Report cards
- Samples of the student’s work
- A summary of the student’s strengths/gifts and needs

This information helps ensure the student’s needs are fully understood and supports the best possible decisions for their learning.

Who is on the IPRC?

An IPRC is made up of at least three people, including:

- A principal or supervisory officer of the school board
- Other members such as a principal, vice-principal, learning resource teacher, or another educator or professional

What Does the IPRC Do?

- The IPRC makes two main decisions:
- Whether a student should be identified as an exceptional pupil, and if so, which category of exceptionality applies
- What type of placement will best support the student’s learning needs, if the student is identified as exceptional

How Often Does the IPRC Meet?

- An IPRC meeting is held when a student is first considered for identification and placement
- After that, the IPRC reviews the student’s identification and placement at least once each school year
- Reviews may happen more often if requested by the family or the school

How Are Families Involved?

- Parents/guardians are important partners in the IPRC process. You are invited to:
- Attend IPRC meetings
- Share your knowledge of your child’s strengths and needs
- Ask questions and express your preferences
- Receive and review written decisions made by the committee

The school will provide the parent/guardian with a copy of any information that will be considered by the IPRC.

The parents/guardians will be invited to attend and participate in all committee discussions and decisions and have the right to request the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting.

To support better understanding of the process, HWDSB has developed two videos for parents/guardians regarding the IPRC process:

[What is an IPRC?](#)

[What happens at IPRC meetings?](#)

The goal of the IPRC is to make thoughtful decisions that support your child's learning, well-being, and sense of belonging. Decisions can be reviewed and adjusted over time as your child grows and their needs change.

If you have questions about the IPRC process, your school team can explain the steps and help you understand what to expect.

Identification

The IPRC will issue a written Statement of Decision which will state:

- Whether the committee has determined that the student should be identified as exceptional; and
- The specific exceptionality/exceptionalities as per Ministry of Education [definitions](#)

Statement of Strengths and Needs

This document outlines your child's strengths and areas where support is needed (academic, social/emotional, and/or physical).

- It is prepared by the school with input from parents/guardians and the student (if appropriate)
- A draft is shared before the IPRC meeting
- It is reviewed and can be updated during the meeting

Placement Decisions

- The IPRC will decide the best placement for your child based on all available information and your input
- The committee first considers placement in a regular classroom with supports
- If this meets your child's needs and aligns with your preferences, it will be recommended
- If not, a special education class may be recommended
- The decision and reasons will be recorded on a Statement of Decision, which you will receive

Annual Reviews

An IPRC review happens at least once each school year, unless you choose in writing to skip it. The committee reviews your child's progress and decides whether to continue or change identification or placement.

Requesting a Review

- You can request a review in writing after your child has been in a placement for 3 months
- Reviews cannot happen more often than every 3 months

After the IPRC Meeting

You will receive the Statement of Decision as soon as possible. It will also be shared with:

- The student (if 16 or older)
- The school, for your child's record

Resolving Concerns

- Schools work with families to resolve concerns respectfully. Support is available from:
 - School staff (including the principal)
 - Special education consultants
 - System Navigation Human Rights Office
 - Board staff and superintendent
 - The resource Shared Solutions may also help

If You Disagree (Next Steps)

Step 1: Reconsideration

- Feel free to reach out to the Special Education, Inclusion & Equity department for support
- You may meet again with the IPRC to discuss concerns

Step 2: Mediation

- You may meet with an independent mediator (paid by the board)

Step 3: Appeal

- If concerns are not resolved:
 - You can file a written appeal within:
 - 30 days of the original decision, or
 - 15 days after a review decision

Appeal Process

- A 3-person appeal board is formed (one chosen by you, one by the board, and a jointly selected chair)
- A meeting is held (informal and family-friendly)
- The board reviews the appeal recommendation and responds within 30 days

If you are still not satisfied, you may request a Special Education Tribunal

Understanding the Special Education Tribunal

If you disagree with the final decision, even after meetings and mediation, you can take your case to a Special Education Tribunal.

What is it?

The Special Education Tribunal is an independent legal process that reviews decisions about:

- Your child's identification (exceptionality)
- Your child's placement
- It is separate from the school board and provides a final, impartial decision

When would a parent/guardian use it?

- You may request a tribunal if:
 - You went through the appeal process
 - You still disagree with the outcome

What happens during the tribunal?

- A panel reviews all the information about your child
- Both you and the school board can share evidence and explain your positions
- The process is more formal than an IPRC or appeal board

What decisions can the tribunal make?

The tribunal will make a final and binding decision about:

- Whether your child’s identification is appropriate
- Whether the placement is appropriate

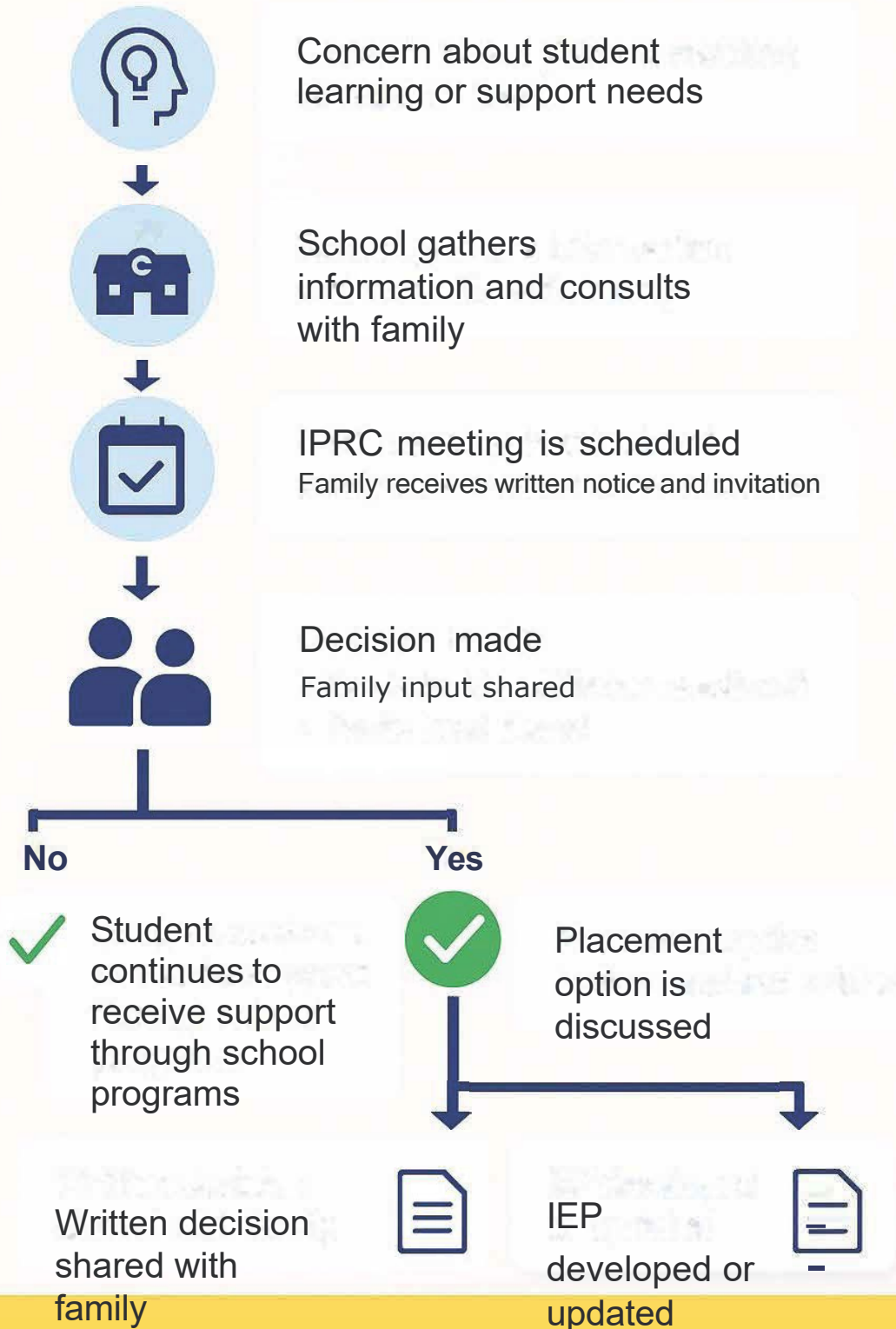
Important things for parents/guardians to know

- You can bring a lawyer or representative (optional)
- You can submit documents, reports, and information
- The process may take time and involves more formal procedures
- The decision must be followed by the school board

The IPRC is not a one-time event. It is part of an ongoing, collaborative process that focuses on supporting your child’s learning, well-being, and sense of belonging. Supports and placements can change over time as your child grows and their needs change.

The IPRC Process

A Visual Guide



SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENTS HWDSB

HWDSB offers a range of placement options to support students with special education needs.

Students who are identified as exceptional, as defined by the Ministry of Education, are supported in the learning environment that best meets their individual strengths and needs.

HWDSB is committed to providing placements where students are included, supported, and able to succeed.

Placement of a student in a Regular Class is the first option considered by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

A range of placements are available in HWDSB:

- Regular Class with Indirect Support
- Regular Class with Resource Assistance
- Regular Class with Withdrawal Assistance
- Special Education Class with Partial Integration into Regular Class
- Special Education Class Full Time

Whenever possible, HWDSB works to support students with special learning needs in the Regular Class at their home school. This allows students to learn within their grade class while receiving appropriate special education supports.

Before considering placement in a Special Education Class, the Board carefully considers whether a student's needs can be met in the Regular Class with added supports and services. This includes using differentiated teaching strategies, modified programs, and short-term interventions. These supports are tried, documented, and reviewed to see if they are meeting the student's needs.

If these supports are not sufficient, placement in a Special Education Class may be discussed as an option. Families are involved throughout this process, and parents/guardians always have the option to choose for their child to remain in a Regular Class at the home school, if that is their preference. The placement decision is reviewed annually and may change as the student strengths, gifts and needs change.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Overall Structure

Special Education, Inclusion and Equity at HWDSB is organized using a Family of Schools (FOS) model. This approach brings together staff who previously worked in separate autism, neurodevelopmental, and behaviour services into one coordinated team that supports a smaller group of schools.

What Does This Mean for Your Child

By working this way, a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) of professionals can respond more quickly and effectively to student needs. Students can access supports and services based on their needs, not on a diagnosis, which helps reduce wait times and the number of referrals needed.

This model creates clearer pathways to support for students and families, improves collaboration among staff, and helps avoid duplication of services, ensuring support is timely, coordinated, and focused on student success.

Each of the five Families of Schools is supported by a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) made up of specialized staff who work together to support students' learning and well-being.

- Special Education Manager (shared)
- Special Education Principal (shared)
- Special Education Consultants (2)
- Trio Resource Team (3) - Special Assignment Teacher, Educational Assistant, Child and Youth Care Practitioner
- Speech and Language Pathologists (2-3)
- Communication Disorders Assistants (2)
- Psychoeducational Consultants (2-3)
- Behaviour Analysts (2)

These teams are closely connected to the schools they support and are familiar with their students and practices. Three times a year, the MDT meets with school teams to review complex student needs, share perspectives, and plan next steps together.

Special Education, Inclusion and Equity Managers are part of each Family of Schools MDT. They also provide leadership and specialized expertise in areas such as psychology, speech and language, behaviour and analytic services, and autism and neurodevelopmental services.

To support consistency and collaboration, Special Education Managers and Principals work across two and a half Families of Schools

Service across the five Family of Schools will continue to be provided by:

- Gifted Centre Teachers
- K-12 SEA Assistive Technology & Classroom Integration Special Assignment Teacher
- Blind/Low Vision Team
- Deaf/Heard of Hearing Team
- ABA Consultant
- Autism Advisor/Peer Support Worker
- Intensive Support Child and Youth Care Practitioners
- Learning Resource Teachers
- Special Education Classroom Teachers
- Educational Assistants
- Occupational Therapists
- Kinesiologist
- Visual Aid Assistant

MDT Trio Resource Team Services

Each MDT Trio Resource Team supports 6–7 schools within a Family of Schools. The team includes a Special Assignment Teacher, Educational Assistant (EA), and Child and Youth Care Practitioner (CYCP).

This team works directly in schools and classrooms to support students with complex communication needs, including self-regulation, behaviour, and social-emotional learning. Their focus is on improving both academic success and student well-being.

The MDT Trio works alongside classroom educators using a Plan–Act–Assess–Reflect approach. They model and coach effective strategies and gradually support educators in using these strategies independently. The team collaborates with school staff to plan next steps and follow-up supports.

This model strengthens support for students with Autism, FASD, ADHD, and other neurodevelopmental conditions. Team members receive ongoing training in best practices, including Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and trauma-informed approaches.

- The Special Assignment Teacher provides consistent, scheduled support throughout the school year
- The EA and CYCP work directly with students and help build educators' skills
- Behaviour Analysts collaborate with MDTs to support both classroom-wide and individual student needs
- Student-specific referrals to Behaviour Analysts are made through the Special Assignment Teacher or school Administrator ensuring coordinated and timely support.

Speech, Language & Communication Services

Strong communication skills are essential for learning, well-being, and success at school. These skills support both spoken and written language, which are important for reading, writing, and overall academic achievement.

The Speech, Language & Communication Services team at HWDSB includes Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and Communicative Disorders Assistants (CDAs). They work in partnership with educators and families to support students with communication needs from Kindergarten to Grade 12+, with emphasis on early intervention.

What Does This Mean for Your Child?

This means your child can receive support to build strong speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills - skills that are important for learning, social connections, and confidence at school.

Depending on your child's needs, support may include:

- Classroom strategies that support communication for all students
- Targeted support in small groups or one-to-one, when needed
- An assessment to better understand your child's communication strengths and needs
- Clear goals developed together with educators and parents/guardians
- Support from trained staff working closely with your child's school team

Services are designed to provide the right level of support at the right time, with a strong focus on early intervention and prevention. Families are partners throughout the process. The SLP and school staff will communicate with you about strategies, progress, and next steps.

When appropriate, families may also be connected with community services to support learning beyond the school setting.

Psychological Services

The Psychological Services team at HWDSB works in partnership with educators, families, and school teams to support students from Kindergarten to Grade 12+ through assessment, consultation, and intervention, with an emphasis on evidence-based practices that promote student success and well-being.

Psychoeducational assessments may include cognitive, academic, social-emotional, and behavioural measures, as well as interviews and observations, to better understand a student's strengths and areas of needs. Assessment results are used to inform programming, guide instructional strategies, support identification processes, and assist in the development of effective, individualized interventions.

PROGRAMS

Speech and Language Program

Provides intensive supports for Grade 1 students with language delays, which are accompanied, in many cases, by speech impairment. The students' speech/language assessments must indicate at least severe expressive language and/or articulation delays, with average or near-average receptive language skills and/or average cognitive skills. Instruction is based on the Grade 1 curriculum with a speech and language focus

Students typically have:

- Severe expressive language delays and/or articulation difficulties
- Average receptive language and/or average cognitive skills
- Eligibility is based on speech and language assessments, completed by the school SLP.
- Instruction follows the Grade 1 curriculum, with a strong focus on speech and language development
- Class size: 12 students

Elementary Social Communication Program (ESCP)

Designed for junior and senior elementary students with autism. Supports students whose primary needs relate to social communication and problem-solving

- Students:
 - Attend their home school 4 days per week
 - Attend the ESCP program school 1 day per week for focused/direct instruction
- Direct teaching focuses on:
 - Social communication skills
 - Self-regulation
 - Social and problem-solving skills

ESCP teachers and educational assistants also provide regular capacity-building support for students at their home schools, working closely with school staff. Students are part of the program for two years.

Secondary Social Communication Program (SSCP)

Supports secondary students with autism who benefit from additional, specialized support to be successful at school and beyond.

Key Features of the Program:

- Supports students with autism in developing social communication and executive functioning skills
- Programming is accommodated or modified at grade-level, based on individual student needs
- Direct teaching focuses on building skills for success at school, home, and in the community

Skill Areas Supported Include:

- Understanding one's own emotions and the emotions of others
- Social communication and social interaction skills
- Developing and maintaining relationships
- Self-awareness as a learner
- Self-advocacy and independence

Additional Supports:

- Planned transition support for post-secondary education and community opportunities
- Students earn a customized learning strategies credit each semester, for all four years of secondary school

Program Locations:

- The SSCP is offered at two secondary schools, Glendale and Ancaster High

AIM: Child and Youth Support Program (Elementary)

Supports students who have ongoing social, emotional, or behavioural challenges that affect their learning and relationships at school. Designed as pull-out support to help students be successful in their regular classroom

Focuses on building skills that support:

- Following school and classroom expectations
- Academic organization
- Positive peer relationships
- Collaborative problem-solving with an AIM Child and Youth Care Practitioner (CYCP)

Programming is individualized and based on:

- Student strengths and values
- School expectations
- Clear goals and positive reinforcement

The AIM Program is designed to support your child while building skills that can be used both at school and beyond, helping them feel confident, included, and ready to learn. The program is guided by research-based practices; including Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), trauma-informed practice, and individualized strategies that support emotional regulation and flexibility

What This Means for Families

Your child receives individualized support to build social, emotional, and behavioural skills needed for success at school.

- The goal is to help your child participate successfully in their regular classroom and school community
- A Child and Youth Care Practitioner (CYCP) works closely with your child to teach and practice skills in a supportive setting, with short-term focused support
- Programming is short-term and flexible, based on your child's strengths, needs, and goals
- Families are included in conversations about goals, progress, and next steps
- The focus is on positive behaviour, learning success, and healthy peer relationships

Gifted Services

Itinerant Teachers for the Gifted work alongside classroom teachers, support staff, and school administrators to help meet the learning needs of students identified as Gifted. They share effective teaching strategies and resources that enhance classroom programming.

These teachers also support school teams by deepening understanding of the unique strengths and learning needs of gifted students, helping educators create engaging and appropriately challenging learning experiences.

Gifted Enrichment Centre

HWDSB operates three Enrichment and Innovation Centres for students identified as Gifted. These Centres offer enrichment programming 5–6 times each year.

The programs focus on helping students:

- Better understand their strengths and challenges
- Recognize their learning styles
- Develop self-advocacy skills

These learning opportunities are designed to enrich students' experiences, build confidence, and support their growth as independent learners within a community of students with similar lived experiences.

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a one-year school-to-work transition program for students with special education needs who are in their final year of high school.

Program Highlights

Designed to prepare students for paid employment after graduation

Combines:

- Classroom instruction
- Hands-on job training in real workplaces

Internships take place at partner sites including:

- Hamilton Health Sciences
- Ron Joyce Children's Hospital/Hamilton General Hospital/Juravinski Hospital

Students are supported by:

- Project SEARCH teachers
- Educational Assistant Skills Trainers
- Workplace mentors and managers

2026–2027 HWDSB Special Education Plan

Interns work alongside staff and build:

- Job-specific skills
- Employability skills
- Confidence and independence

After Graduation

- Graduates receive continued support from local employment service providers
- The goal is to help students secure meaningful employment in the community

Project SEARCH focuses on building competitive, transferable job skills and supporting successful transitions from school to work.

What This Means for Families

- Your child can take part in a structured, one-year program focused on preparing for employment after high school
- Learning happens in real workplaces, helping students build confidence, independence, and job-ready skills
- Your child receives daily support from trained school staff and workplace mentors
- The program focuses on practical, transferable skills that employers value
- Families can feel confident that students are supported during the transition from school to work
- After graduation, your child continues to receive help from community employment services to find meaningful work

Project SEARCH supports families by providing a clear and supportive pathway from school to employment, helping students build skills for greater independence and success in the community.

Transition Work Experience Program (TWEP)

The Transition Work Experience Program (TWEP) provides short-term work experiences for students in Special Education Classes for half days once a week during a semester.

Program Overview

- Available to students ages 16–21 with identified special education needs
- Offers real-world, on-the-job learning to help students explore work interests and build employability skills
- Students receive hands-on training in real workplace settings

Student Support

- Students are supported by TWEP Educational Assistants and school staff
- Support includes:
 - Job training and coaching
 - Teaching workplace responsibilities
 - Instruction on workplace safety procedures
- School board staff provide ongoing monitoring and guidance throughout the placement

Goals of TWEP

- Support students in developing work readiness and employability skills
- Help students explore different job options and interests
- Support students in setting realistic goals for employment and personal growth
- Assist with the transition from school to the workplace
- Build strong community partnerships between schools and local employers

TWEP helps students gain confidence, practical skills, and valuable experiences that support their transition from school to employment.

What This Means for Families

- Your child has the opportunity to gain real-world work experience in a supportive and supervised setting
- Students learn job skills, workplace routines, and safety practices that support future employment
- School staff provide ongoing coaching and monitoring, so students are not left to manage independently
- The program helps students explore interests and strengths related to work and build confidence
- TWEP supports a supported transition from school to the workforce, at a pace appropriate for each student
- Families can feel reassured that students are developing practical skills for greater independence and community involvement

The Transition Work Experience Program helps prepare students for life beyond school by building skills, confidence, and connections to the community.

Intensive Transition Work Experience Program (ITWEP)

The Intensive Transition to Work Experience Program (ITWEP) supports students who receive special education programs and services as they prepare for life after school, with a strong focus on future employment. iTWEP is similar to secondary school Co-op as students participate for a half-day in one semester.

Key goals of the program include:

- Helping students explore work and career options over time
- Building job-related and employability skills
- Supporting a successful transition from school to the workforce
- Creating strong partnerships between schools and community businesses

ITWEP is designed to help students grow in independence, confidence, and readiness for work, while providing meaningful learning experiences connected to real-world employment opportunities. HWDSB is currently looking to expand iTWEP with new community partners.

What This Means for Families

- Your child receives focused support to prepare for employment after school
- Students have opportunities to explore different job options and build practical, job-related skills over time
- Learning is connected to real-world work experiences that build confidence and independence
- The program supports a smooth transition from school to the workforce
- Partnerships with community businesses help students gain meaningful experience and understand workplace expectations
- Families can feel reassured that employment planning is intentional, supportive, and centered on student strengths

ITWEP helps students build the skills and confidence they need for life after school, with employment and community participation as key goals.

ExSL Program Classrooms

The ExSL Program Classrooms are elementary Special Education programs designed to support students who have significant self-regulation and behavioural challenges that make learning difficult.

These programs combine:

- Grade-level curriculum, adapted to support student success
- A readiness-skills focus, including social, emotional, and behaviour skills

Students are supported by a team of classroom educators and special education staff who work together to plan and deliver programming. When helpful, the school team also works with community support agencies to further support students' social, emotional, and resiliency skill development.

The goal of the ExSL program is to help students build the skills they need to engage in learning, develop positive relationships, and experience success at school. ExSL is offered in four elementary schools and students receive transportation to attend.

What This Means for Your Child

- Your child receives specialized support to help with self-regulation, behaviour, and emotional skills that affect learning
- A team of educators and special education staff works together to assess and support your child's needs
- When appropriate, the school may also work with community support agencies to strengthen social, emotional, and resiliency skills
- Families are included in conversations about goals, progress, and next steps
- The focus is on helping your child develop confidence in who they are, become better at problem solving in social situations, and build resilience
- The ExSL Classroom is designed to support your child's academic growth while helping them develop the skills needed to engage positively in learning and school life.

SAFE Intervention Elementary

The SAFE Intervention Program supports students who have complex medical, mental health, behavioural, and academic needs and who may require an alternate, supportive learning environment. This is designed as a short-term placement with planning for next steps

The SAFE Intervention Program works closely with community partners and medical practitioners to address immediate assessment, behavioural stabilization, and school re-engagement. The goal is also preparation for transition back to school settings and long-term success.

What This Means for Your Child

- Your child receives short-term, focused support in a safe and structured learning environment
- The program helps students stabilize, re-engage with learning, and better understand their needs before next steps are decided
- A Teacher and Child and Youth Care Practitioner (CYCP) work closely with your child to support learning and well-being
- Planning is done thoughtfully to support a successful transition to the next learning setting
- Families and community partners are kept informed and included in discussions about progress and future plans

SEA Technology Trainer Role

The role of the SEA trainer is to support all students using sea technology including devices such as talkers, eye gaze technology etc. The team will collaborate with FOS Multi-Disciplinary Teams, SEIE consultants, to support programming that leverages technology. The team will also collaborate with Occupational Therapists and Physio therapists to support the use of mobility equipment (such as standers and bikes).

Empower™ Reading Program (Program Department)

The Empower™ Reading Program supports students who experience reading difficulties by teaching clear, proven strategies to improve decoding, spelling, reading comprehension and vocabulary skills according to age groups. The program was developed by the Learning Disabilities Research Program (LDRP) at SickKids in Toronto.

Key Features:

- Uses direct instruction and multiple reading strategies
- Helps students:
 - Decode (sound out) words
 - Spell accurately
 - Understand what they read
- Focuses on building skills in a structured and supportive way

Programs Offered at HWDSB:

- Grades 2–5: Empower™ Reading Decoding and Spelling (110 lessons)
- Grades 6–8: Empower™ Reading Decoding and Spelling (90 lessons)

The Empower™ Reading Program helps students build confidence and skills so they can become more successful and independent readers.

What This Means for Families

- Your child receives structured, research-based reading instruction to support decoding, spelling, and reading comprehension
- Teaching focuses on clear strategies that help students understand how to read more successfully
- The program builds confidence and independence in reading over time
- Instruction is delivered in a supportive, small-group setting by trained educators
- Families can expect improvements in reading skills that support learning across subject areas
- The Empower™ Reading Program provides targeted support to help students strengthen essential reading skills and experience greater success at school

Wilson Reading System to Support Reading Instruction

In Secondary Schools, HWDSB uses Wilson Reading System. It is Ministry recommended and is a structured literacy program based on the Science of Reading, supporting students to progress on their reading journey in a personalized learning structure.

Wilson Reading System Just Words

HWDSB is piloting the use of Wilson Just Words in various elementary schools and secondary Special Education Classrooms, Just Words emphasizes phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, and spelling.

These programs are designed to provide consistent, effective reading support so students can better access learning across all subject areas.

Lexia® Core5® Reading (Program Department)

Lexia® Core5® Reading is a comprehensive, technology-based literacy program that provides tier two reading instruction for students with a Learning Disability or other specific learner profiles. The Lexia® Core® program has two distinct modules that provide explicit, systematic and personalized learning for students in different skill areas. The Lexia® Core5® program supports learning in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, structural analysis, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The Lexia® Core® PowerUp program supports skill building in the areas of word study, grammar and comprehension.

The goal is to help your child become a more confident, independent reader who can better access learning across all subjects

Lexia® programs support families by providing consistent, research-based reading instruction that helps students strengthen foundational literacy skills and experience greater success at school.

What This Means for Families

- Your child receives structured, Ministry-recommended reading instruction that is tailored to their individual learning needs
- Teaching is mastery-based, meaning students build skills step by step and move forward when they are ready
- Instruction focuses on essential reading skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, spelling, and comprehension
- Programs like Wilson Reading System and Just Words provide clear, research-based strategies that support struggling readers
- Support may be provided in secondary classrooms, special education settings, or through pilot programs in elementary schools
- The goal is to help students make steady progress, build confidence, and become more independent readers
- Your child receives personalized, technology-based reading support designed to meet their specific learning needs
- Instruction focuses on building essential literacy skills step by step, at a pace that matches your child's progress
- Students work on key areas such as phonics, word skills, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension
- The program provides targeted Tier 2 support, often in addition to regular classroom instruction
- Progress is monitored regularly so instruction can be adjusted as your child's skills grow

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

HWDSB's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services support students with hearing needs in both elementary and secondary schools.

Itinerant Teachers work closely with classroom teachers and Language Acquisition Support Workers (LASWs) and other professionals, such as Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs), to create supportive and accessible learning environments.

Supports may include:

- Helping schools put the right classroom, instructional, and assessment accommodations in place for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Working directly with students in the classroom or in small groups
- Supporting the development of listening, language, and academic skills
- Teaching students how to manage and use hearing assistive technology
- Providing care and maintenance of hearing equipment
- Liaising with provincial school personnel as appropriate to support student needs

Audiology services are provided through contracted specialists to support student hearing needs.

These services help ensure students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing can fully participate in learning and achieve success at school

Blind and Low Vision Services

HWDSB's Blind and Low Vision Services support elementary and secondary students with low vision or are legally blind.

Itinerant teachers work closely with classroom teachers, parents/guardians, and other professionals, such as the Deaf-Blind Intervenor or Orientation and Mobility Specialist to ensure students can fully access the curriculum and participate in learning.

Supports may include:

- Direct Braille instruction and Braille transcription
- Adaptations or modifications to curriculum materials
- Support with assistive technology and accessibility tools
- Help with transitions to secondary school, post-secondary education, and future careers
- Participation in the IPRC process and coordination with board staff
- Orientation and Mobility services (learning to move safely and independently) are provided where appropriate through contracted specialists.

These services are designed to help students who are blind or have low vision learn confidently, independently, and successfully at school and beyond.

Child Youth Care Practitioner Intensive Supports

School-based programming led by Child and Youth Care Practitioners designed to support the development of resilience, social behaviours, and psychological flexibility in elementary and secondary aged students in a variety of classroom settings.

Special Education, Inclusion and Equity Transition Navigation

This service supports students with disabilities as they move into school, between grades or programs, and out of school. It helps families and students plan for successful transitions at every stage.

The focus includes:

- Guiding students and families through school and post-secondary transitions
- Building strong connections with families, employers, and community services
- Supporting students in developing skills and plans for their future

The goal is to promote inclusion, equity, and future readiness so students feel supported, confident, and prepared for life beyond school.

- Creation of a Student Voice Circle
- Enhanced entry to school processes
- Transition supports between schools and/or programs internally and externally
- Expansion of Project Search, TWEP (Transition Work Experience Program)
- Introduction of ITWEP at the HWDSB Education Centre (Intensive Transition Work Experience Program)
- Working with schools and community on co-op experiences for students with disabilities
- Community, Employment, and Resource fairs and events
- Elementary to Secondary transition support and programming for students, staff and families
- Development of a comprehensive website dedicated to supporting and informing student transitions Broadening of video and print resource library for students, parents/guardians on transition planning in all pathways
- Support for educators on transitions, pathways and supports
- Diversifying networks and connections
- Ongoing study and refinement of best practices
- Staff development and training (transitions/accessibility)
- Job readiness programming
- College/University readiness programming and campus tours
- Collaboration across and with other HWDSB departments
- Ongoing engagement with SEAC
- Evaluation of all activities and trends through ongoing data collection and analysis

SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSES (ACCESSED THROUGH THE IPRC)

Autism Special Education Class

These classes support students identified with autism spectrum disorder. ASD is a neurodevelopmental condition that can affect communication, social interaction, and behaviour. Students in ASD Special Education classes demonstrate a wide range of strengths and needs, and require significant individualized supports, accommodations, and/or program modifications to access the curriculum and participate fully in school life.

Instruction is personalized for each child and focuses on building communication skills, independence, and self-regulation.

Students are supported through:

- Individualized programming based on their strengths and needs
- Use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), such as picture systems or communication devices
- Strategies that help with sensory regulation and daily routines

The goal is to help each student communicate more effectively, feel regulated and safe, and build independence at school.

Comprehensive Special Education Class

These classes are designed for students with a range of identified exceptionalities who demonstrate a level of independence that enables participation in a less intensive specialized setting. They represent the largest class-size special education environments and provide structured, supportive programming that includes accommodations, and where appropriate, modifications. The focus is on developing academic skills, self-regulation, social competencies, and independence, while supporting meaningful integration opportunities.

Students are supported through:

- Instruction tailored to their learning strengths and needs
- Use of technology (such as assistive software or devices) to support learning
- Teaching self-awareness so students understand how they learn best

When appropriate, students may join regular class programs based on their interests and readiness.

At the secondary level, students may earn course credits through these integration opportunities.

Developmental Disability Special Education Class

These classes are designed for students identified with a Developmental Disability by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). Programming focuses on the development of communication, social, academic, and functional life skills, and is delivered through individualized education plans (IEPs) with support from specialized staff and, where appropriate, multidisciplinary services.

The focus is on:

- Developing communication skills, including alternative ways to communicate (AAC)
- Building daily living, social, and functional skills
- Providing meaningful learning experiences at each student's level

The goal is to support students in making progress, building independence, and participating as fully as possible in school life.

Elementary Multiple Special Education Class

These classes are designed for students identified with Multiple Exceptionalities by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). The complexity and interaction of their strengths and needs require specialized instruction, individualized education plans (IEPs), and access to multidisciplinary supports to support learning, independence, and well-being. Students in multiple exceptionalities classes have significant physical, communication, and learning needs.

Programming is highly individualized and focuses on:

- Supporting communication using a variety of methods
- Addressing physical and mobility needs
- Developing cognitive, social, and daily living skills

The goal is to help each student access learning in a safe, supportive environment and make meaningful progress at their own pace.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN

An IEP is a written plan describing the special education services and/or program required by a particular student.

It is a personalized plan based on each student's strengths and learning needs, identified through assessment. It outlines the supports your child needs to be successful at school. HWDSB's BRAIN (Building Responsive Approaches for Instructional Needs) interactive document could be used to support IEP development, as it outlines strategies aligned with students' learning profiles.

More information about the IEP can be found in a video for parents/guardians:

[What is an IEP?](#)

The IEP includes:

- Accommodations and/or modified expectations from the Ontario Curriculum
- Alternative learning goals, when needed
- Special education services and supports to help your child reach their goals

The IEP is a working document, meaning it is reviewed and updated regularly as your child grows and their needs change. Parents/guardians and the student are involved in developing the IEP and are informed whenever changes are made.

If the IPRC identifies a student as exceptional and the parent/guardian agree with the identification and placement, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be created within 30 school days of the student starting the special education program.

The IEP is developed using the student's strengths and needs identified by the IPRC and outlines the supports, goals, and services the student will receive. Parents/guardians, are an important part of this process,

An IEP can also be created for a student who has not gone through the IPRC process. In some cases, the school may decide that an IEP is needed if a student requires special education supports or services to attend school, meet learning expectations, or show their learning in different ways.

In these situations, the IEP helps outline the supports and strategies the student needs to be successful. Parents/guardians are included in the process.

If parents/guardians have questions or concerns about their child's program, progress, or IEP, they are encouraged to share them with the school team.

If changes are agreed upon, the IEP will be updated, and a revised copy will be sent home to keep parents/guardians informed.

How are concerns submitted in writing?

Parents/guardians may:

- Email their child's classroom teacher or special education teacher
- Write a note or letter and send it to the school (paper or electronic)
- Use the school's communication platform (such as a parent portal or messaging app, if available)

The written message should briefly describe the question or concern about the child's program, progress, or IEP.

Once the concern is received, the teacher responsible for the IEP will contact the parent/guardian to arrange a meeting to discuss next steps.

If there are still questions or concerns, parents/guardians are encouraged to request a meeting with the principal or vice-principal. The principal will help answer questions and work with the family and school staff to ensure the student's needs are supported and the best possible program is in place.

How do I request a meeting?

You can request a meeting in any of the following ways:

- Email the school and ask to meet with the principal or vice-principal
- Contact the main office by phone and request a meeting
- Send a written note (paper or electronic) to the school, addressed to the principal

In your message, briefly explain that you would like to discuss questions or concerns about your child's program or supports. The school will then contact you to arrange a meeting time that works for everyone.

HWDSB is committed to meet the Ministry of Education Standards for IEPs. The school board has an informal IEP Review Process which is done annually. The internal review will provide next steps for training of learning resource teachers.

What does the Informal Review involve?

The informal review is an internal check-in to make sure IEPs meet Ministry expectations and continue to support students effectively. It does not change a student's placement or program.

The review may include:

- Looking at a sample of IEPs to ensure they are clear, complete, and up-to-date
- Checking that strengths, needs, goals, and supports are clearly connected
- Ensuring accommodations and expectations align with classroom practice
- Identifying common areas where teachers may need more guidance or training

The purpose of the review is to improve consistency and quality, not to evaluate students or families.

Information from the review helps the board plan professional learning and support for teachers, so IEPs continue to reflect best practice and support student success.

If any changes are needed for an individual student's IEP, parents/guardians, and caregivers are informed and involved, as always.

HWDSB

Hamilton Wentworth District School Board Individual Education Plan

Student Information

Student Name:
School:
Principal:
IEP Completed:

Student Number:
OEN:
Date of Birth:
Grade:
Current School Year:
IEP Coordinated By:

Rationale for developing the IEP

Student identified as exceptional by IPRC

Student not identified by IPRC but requires special education program/services, including accommodations and/or modified/alternative learning expectations

Placement Information

Identification:

Placement:

Last IPRC/Continuation Date:

Placement Date:

Principal Signature

This IEP has been developed according to the ministry's standards and appropriately addresses the student's strengths and needs. The learning expectations will be reviewed and the student's achievement evaluated at least once every reporting period.

Principal Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

I was consulted in the development of the IEP

Parent/Guardian

I have declined the opportunity to be consulted in the development of the IEP

Parent/Guardian

I have received a copy of the IEP

Parent/Guardian

Parent/Guardian and Student Comments:

Parent Signature

Date



Student Information

Student Name:

Current School Year:

Grade:

Date of Birth:

School:

Sources Consulted in the Development of the IEP

IPRC Statement of Decision (if applicable)

Previous IEP

Assessment Summary

Source	
Description:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date Administered:

Relevant Medical Conditions

Yes (list below) No

Health Support Services

Yes (Indicate type below) No

Student's Strengths and Needs

Strengths	Needs

Accommodations

Accommodations are assumed to be the same for all subjects/program areas unless otherwise indicated.

Instructional Accommodations	Environmental Accommodations	Assessment Accommodations

Individualized Equipment

Item	Description
<i>No records exist</i>	

Provincial Assessments

This is a provincial assessment year Yes

No Name of Assessment:



Student Information

Student Name:

Current School Year:

Grade:

Date of Birth:

School:

Subjects, Courses or Alternative Programs to which the IEP Applies

This section is completed only if the student has Modified or Alternative Programming.

Course	Teacher	Program Type

Evaluation

Reporting Dates: November February June

Reporting Format: Provincial Report Card Alternative Report

IEP Staff Development Team



Hamilton Wentworth District
School Board Program
Language - Reading

Student Information

Student Name: F. Smith

Current School Year: 2020-21

Grade: 0

Date of Birth: 03/31/2011

School:

[Baseline Level of Achievement](#)

Typically from June Report Card.

Letter Grade/Mark:

Source:

Curriculum Grade Level:

[Description of Achievement Level](#)

Date from last report card:

[Annual Program Goals](#)

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Term/Semester	Learning Expectations	Strategies, Resources and Support Services	Assessment Methods
<i>No Learning Expectations Entered</i>			



Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
Transition Plan

Student Information

Student Name:	Student Number:
Student Number:	OEN:
School:	Date of Birth:
Identification:	Grade:
	Principal:

No Transition Support is required at this time.

Transition Goals

Next steps to achieve this goal

Actions	Responsibility	Timelines
<i>No Actions entered</i>		

Future Recommendations (if applicable)

Actions	Responsibility	Timelines
<i>No Actions entered</i>		



Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
IEP Consultation Log

Student Information	
Student Name:	Current School Year:
School:	Date of Birth:
	Grade:

Log Information

Date	Person Contacted	Type of Contact	Actions or Outcomes
<i>No log information entered.</i>			

The information gathered on this form is gathered pursuant to the Education Act. The information will be used for the purpose of planning and programming. Any general questions about the information gathered on this form may be discussed with the Principal of your child's school.

SPECIAL EDUCATION, INCLUSION & EQUITY STAFF

Special Education Staff	25/26	26/27
Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Consultant	1.0	1.0
Autism Peer Support Worker	1.0	1.0
Behaviour Analysts (BCBA)	10.0	10.0
Centre for Success Special Assignment Teachers*	3.0	0.0
Child & Youth Care Practitioners	80.0	69.0
Communicative Disorders Assistants	12.0	10.0
Deafblind Intervener	1.0	1.0
Educational Assistants	695.5	685.5
Gifted Enrichment Special Assignment Teachers	3.0	3.0
Gifted Itinerant Special Assignment Teacher	1.0	1.0
Itinerant Teachers: Blind/Low Vision	3.0	3.0
Itinerant Teachers: Centre for Success*	6.0	0.0
Itinerant Teachers: Deaf/Hard of Hearing	4.0	4.0
Kinesiologist	1.0	1.0
Language Acquisition Support Worker	3.0	3.0
Learning Resource Teachers	165.34	158.84
Manager: Special Education, Inclusion and Equity	2.0	2.0
Manager: Psychological Services	1.0	1.0
Manager: Speech, Language and Communication Services	1.0	1.0
Multi-Disciplinary Team Teachers	15.0	14.0
Occupational Therapist	2.0	2.0
Principals: Special Education, Inclusion & Equity	3.0	2.0
Project Search and iTWEP Teachers	3.0	3.0
Psychoeducational Consultants	15.0	15.0
SEA Consultant	1.0	0.0
SEA IIT Assistant	2.0	2.0
SEA Assistive Technology Trainer and Classroom Integration Teacher *	0.0	4.0
Special Education Class Teachers	82.0	88.0
Special Education Consultants	11.0	10.0
Speech-Language Pathologists	19.0	17.5
Supervisor: Special Education, Inclusion and Equity (Behaviour Analyst)	0.0	1.0
System Dedicated Early Childhood Educators	8.0	0.0
Team Lead Behaviour Analyst	1.0	0.0
Transitional Work Experience Program (TWEP EAs)	2.0	2.0
Visual Aid Assistant	1.0	1.0
Special Education Programs: ExSL	5.0	4.0
Special Education Programs: Social Communication	4.0	4.0
Special Education Programs: SAFE	2.0	1.0
Special Education Programs: Speech & Language	4.0	4.0
Assistant SEA Technician	1.0	1.0
Administrative Assistant: SEA	1.0	0.5
Administrative Assistants: SEIE	3.5	4.0

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT

Special Equipment Allocation (SEA)

HWDSB provides funding to purchase specialized equipment for students with special education needs so they can fully participate in learning and school life.

In addition to board funding, the Ministry of Education provides Special Equipment Allocation (SEA) funding to help cover the cost of equipment when it is recommended by a qualified professional and is essential for a student's learning and access to the curriculum.

We follow Ministry guidelines to ensure equipment is appropriate, cost-effective, and used effectively.

When needed, students, educators, and staff receive training to support the best use of equipment.

HWDSB is responsible for ensuring that:

- Equipment is working properly and continues to meet student needs
- Equipment is replaced when students outgrow it or when it no longer works
- Repairs, upgrades, or refurbishment are considered before replacement
- Equipment is reassigned to other students when it is no longer needed
- Equipment is shared between students when appropriate and possible

Special Equipment Allocation (SEA) – How Funding Works

HWDSB receives Special Equipment Allocation (SEA) funding in two ways to support students who need specialized equipment:

Base (Formula) Funding:

The board receives a set amount each year based on student enrollment. This funding is used to purchase most equipment.

Claims-Based Funding:

For individual equipment items costing more than \$5,000, the Ministry provides additional funding when approved.

What HWDSB Is Responsible For

HWDSB manages all aspects of SEA equipment, including:

- Purchasing equipment for students
- Submitting funding claims for higher-cost items
- Covering insurance, repairs, upgrades, and replacements
- Providing setup, training, and ongoing support

All equipment and funding claims are carefully tracked and reported to the Ministry each year.

Who Is Eligible

Students may receive SEA-funded equipment if:

- The equipment is essential for learning, participation, or safety at school and
- The need is recommended by a qualified professional and
- The support is documented in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Students do not need to be formally identified through an IPRC to be eligible.

Examples of Supported Equipment

Equipment is selected based on individual student needs and may include:

- Technology (e.g., laptops, tablets, assistive software)
- Communication tools (e.g., FM systems, voice output devices)
- Vision or hearing supports (e.g., braille, print enlargers)
- Specialized furniture (e.g., adjustable desks, chairs)
- Mobility and safety equipment (e.g., lifts, positioning devices)
- Sensory and therapy supports (e.g., weighted items, therapy tools)

Important Clarifications

SEA funding is only for specialized, student-specific equipment. It does not cover:

- Building upgrades or classroom renovations (e.g., elevators, sound systems)
- General classroom technology or materials used by all students
- Curriculum materials (e.g., textbooks, software used for whole-class instruction)
- Assessment costs

Equipment Transfers

- If a student moves to another school board in Ontario, the equipment usually moves with the student
- Equipment does not transfer to private schools, post-secondary institutions, or out of province
- School boards may provide new equipment if systems are not compatible

Our Approach

HWDSB ensures that equipment is:

- Appropriate and cost-effective
- Used effectively with training and support
- Maintained, updated, and reassigned when no longer needed

TRANSPORTATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The school your child attends for Special Education is determined by the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). This may be your child's home school or another school that better meets their needs. If the home school is not accessible, placement may be at the closest appropriate school. Transportation eligibility depends on both distance (Policy 3.10) and your child's individual physical, intellectual, or safety needs

If your child does not meet the distance requirement, the school may request a personalized transportation plan. This process is led by the principal and developed collaboratively with Special Education, Inclusion and Equity, and Transportation Services, and must be approved by a superintendent. Students who attend their home school but have significant physical, intellectual, emotional, or communication needs may also qualify for personalized transportation through this process.

Students in certain Special Education classes (such as Autism, Developmental, Multiple, and Comprehensive classes), as well as those in programs such as ECPP, CTEP, Provincial Schools, or Demonstration Schools, may be eligible for transportation. The Board is also expanding a multi-year approval process for some students with ongoing transportation needs to reduce paperwork and improve efficiency.

Transportation is provided in the most cost-effective way possible, typically by school bus, but in some cases students may travel in smaller groups or individually. Decisions about the type of transportation are made by Transportation Services in consultation with the school and family. Schools also focus on helping students develop skills to use more independent forms of transportation when possible.

Safety equipment, such as booster seats and harnesses, may be provided if approved. Drivers are responsible for installing vehicle-based equipment correctly, while parents and school staff ensure that portable equipment is used properly. All drivers are trained and licensed, with additional training in first aid, EpiPen use, and accessibility requirements. Vehicles are equipped with communication systems and must follow strict safety procedures to ensure students are transported safely.

TRANSITION PLANNING

At HWDSB, transition planning helps students with special education needs move successfully through important stages of their school journey.

Transition planning is coordinated by the Special Education, Inclusion and Equity team and follows Ministry of Education requirements. Plans are created for all students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), and in some cases, for other students receiving special education supports.

Planning begins when a student enters school and continues until they leave. School teams work together with students (when appropriate), families, and community partners to develop and review transition plans. These plans are included as part of the student's IEP and are updated regularly.

Key Transition Points

Students may receive support during important transitions, such as:

- Starting school
- Moving between grades
- Transitioning from elementary to secondary school
- Planning for life after secondary school (e.g., work, college, community)
- Returning to school after a medical absence or treatment
- Starting school after community-based programs (e.g., ABA)
- Changing classes, programs, or schools

Support for Families

HWDSB provides tools and resources to support families and students through transitions, including Ministry guides and board-developed resources such as:

- Planning Entry to School
- Transition Planning Resource Guide
- Parents as Partners
- Transitions for Inclusive Pathways (TIPS)

Resources

Ministry of Education (2017) [Special Education in Ontario](#): Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Ministry of Education (2005) [Planning Entry to School](#): A Resource Guide

Ministry of Education (2013). [Policy and Program Memorandum 156](#): Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs.

Ministry of Education (2007). [Policy and Program Memorandum 140](#): Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) into Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are an essential part of delivering special education programs and services. The roles and responsibilities within special education are outlined below.

The Ontario Ministry of Education

- Defines, through the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda, the legal obligations of school boards regarding the provision of special education programs and services, and prescribes the categories and definitions of exceptionality;
- Ensures that school boards provide appropriate special education programs and services for their exceptional pupils;
- Establishes the funding for special education through the structure of the funding model. The model consists of the Foundation Grant, the Special Education Grant, and other special purpose grants;
- Requires school boards to report on their expenditures for special education;
- Sets province-wide standards for curriculum and reporting of achievement;
- Requires school boards to maintain special education plans, review them annually, and submit amendments to the Ministry;
- Requires school boards to establish Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs);
- Establishes Special Education Tribunals to hear disputes between parents and school boards regarding the identification and placement of exceptional pupils;
- Establishes a provincial Advisory Council on Special Education to advise the Minister of Education on matters related to special education programs and services;
- Operates Provincial and Demonstration Schools for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf-blind, or who have severe learning disabilities.

The district school board or school authority

- Establishes school board policy and practices that comply with the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;
- Monitors school compliance with the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;
- Requires staff to comply with the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;
- Provides appropriately qualified staff to provide programs and services for the exceptional pupils of the board;
- Obtains the appropriate funding and reports on the expenditures for special education;
- Develops and maintains a special education plan that is amended from time to time to meet the current needs of the exceptional pupils of the board;
- Reviews the plan annually and submits amendments to the Minister of Education;
- Provides statistical reports to the ministry as required and as requested;
- Prepares a parent guide to provide parents with information about special education programs, services, and procedures;
- Establishes one or more IPRCs to identify exceptional pupils and determine appropriate placements for them;
- Establishes a Special Education Advisory Committee;
- Provides professional development to staff on special education.

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

- Makes recommendations to the board with respect to any matter affecting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the board;
- Participates in the board’s annual review of its special education plan;
- Participates in the board’s annual budget process as it relates to special education;
- Reviews the financial statements of the board as they relate to special education;
- Provides information to parents/guardians, as requested;

The school principal

- Carries out duties as outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda, and through board policies;
- Communicates Ministry of Education and school board expectations to staff;
- Ensures that appropriately qualified staff are assigned to teach Special Education Classes;
- Communicates board policies and procedures about special education to staff, students, and parents;
- Ensures that the identification and placement of exceptional pupils, through an IPRC, is done according to the procedures outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and board policies;
- Consults with parents and with school board staff to determine the most appropriate program for exceptional pupils;
- Ensures the development, implementation, and review of a student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP), including a transition plan, according to provincial requirements;
- Ensures that parents are consulted in the development of their child’s IEP and that they are provided with a copy of the IEP;
- Ensures the delivery of the program as set out in the IEP;
- Ensures that appropriate assessments are requested if necessary and that parental consent is obtained.

The teacher

- Carries out duties as outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;
- Follows board policies and procedures regarding special education;
- Maintains up-to-date knowledge of special education practices;
- Where appropriate, works with special education staff and parents/guardians to develop the IEP for an exceptional pupil;
- Provides the program for the exceptional pupil in the Regular Class, as outlined in the IEP;
- Communicates the student’s progress to parent/guardian;
- Works with other school board staff to review and update the student’s IEP.

The special education teacher, in addition to the responsibilities listed above under “the teacher”

- Holds qualifications, in accordance with Regulation 298, to teach special education;
- Monitors the student’s progress with reference to the IEP and modifies the program as necessary;
- Assists in providing educational assessments for exceptional pupils.

The parent/guardian or caregiver

- Becomes familiar with and informed about board policies and procedures in areas that affect the child;
- Participates in IPRCs, parent-teacher conferences, and other relevant school activities;
- Participates in the development of the IEP;
- Becomes acquainted with the school staff working with the student;
- Supports the student at home;
- Works with the school principal and teachers to solve problems;
- Is responsible for the student’s attendance at school.

The student

- Complies with the requirements as outlined in the Education Act, regulations, and policy/program memoranda;
- Complies with board policies and procedures;
- Participates in IPRCs, parent-teacher conferences, and other activities, as appropriate.

CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF EXCEPTIONALITIES

The Education Act identifies five categories of exceptionalities for exceptional students:

- Behaviour
- Communication (Autism, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Language Impairment, Speech Impairment, Learning Disability)
- Intellectual (Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability, Developmental Disability)
- Physical (Physical Disability, Blind and Low Vision)
- Multiple

Category	Ministry of Education Definition
Behaviour	
Behavioural Exceptionality	<p>A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships; b. excessive fears or anxieties; c. a tendency to compulsive reaction; d. an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof.
Communication	
Communication - Autism	<p>A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. disturbances in: rate of educational development; ability to relate to the environment; mobility; perception, speech, and language; b. lack of representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language.
Communication - Deaf and Hard of Hearing	<p>An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.</p>
Communication - Language Impairment	<p>A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, and which may:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication; and b. include one or more of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language delay; • dysfluency; <p>voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.</p>
Communication - Speech Impairment	<p>A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.</p>

Category	Ministry of Education Definition
Communication - Learning Disability	<p>One of a number of neurodevelopmental disorders that persistently and significantly has an impact on the ability to learn and use academic and other skills and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affects the ability to perceive or process verbal or non-verbal information in an effective and accurate manner in students who have assessed intellectual abilities that are <i>at least</i> in the average range; • results in (a) academic underachievement that is inconsistent • with the intellectual abilities of the student (which are at least in the average range), and/or (b) academic achievement that can be maintained by the student only with extremely high levels of effort and/or with additional support; • results in difficulties in the development and use of skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, mathematics, and work habits and learning skills; • may typically be associated with difficulties in one or more cognitive processes, such as phonological processing; memory and attention; processing speed; perceptual- motor processing; visual-spatial processing; executive functions (e.g., self-regulation of behaviour and emotions, planning, organizing of thoughts and activities, prioritizing, decision making); • may be associated with difficulties in social interaction (e.g., difficulty in understanding social norms or the point of view of others); with various other conditions or disorders, diagnosed or undiagnosed; or with other exceptionalities; • is <i>not</i> the result of a lack of acuity in hearing and/or vision that has not been corrected; intellectual disabilities; socio-economic factors; cultural differences; lack of proficiency in the language of instruction; lack of motivation or effort; gaps in school attendance or inadequate opportunity to benefit from instruction.

Category	Ministry of Education Definition
Intellectual	
Giftedness	An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.
Mild Intellectual Disability	A learning disorder characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. an ability to profit educationally within a Regular Class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and support services; b. an inability to profit educationally within a Regular Class because of slow intellectual development; c. a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self- support.
Developmental Disability	A severe learning disorder characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development; b. an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development; c. a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.
Physical	
Physical Disability	A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of students without exceptionalities who are of the same age or development level.
Blind and Low Vision	A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.
Multiple	
Multiple Exceptionalities	A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such a nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.

PROVINCIAL AND DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO

Provincial Schools and Provincial Demonstration Schools are operated by the Ministry of Education

- Provincial Schools Branch oversees the policies and operation of these schools;
- Qualified teachers who are employed by the Provincial Schools Authority or seconded from District School Boards deliver the educational programs;
- The Provincial Schools Resource Services Department provides a range of services to families and school boards in support of students who are blind, deaf-blind, low-vision, deaf, hard of hearing or who have a severe learning disability;
- Programs include workshops, on-line learning opportunities and early intervention programs designed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and ideas so that students across the province are able to achieve their full academic potential
- Provide an alternative education option;
- Serve as regional resource centres for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf-blind;
- Provide preschool home visiting services for students who are deaf or deaf-blind;
- Develop and provide learning materials and media for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf-blind;
- Provide school board teachers with resource services;
- Play a valuable role in teacher training;
- Provide residential services and programs for those students living outside the day travel area.

W. Ross Macdonald School: School for the Blind and Deaf-Blind

W. Ross Macdonald School is located in Brantford and provides education for students who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind. The school provides:

- A provincial resource centre for the visually impaired and deaf-blind;
- Support to local school boards through consultation and the provision of special learning materials, such as Braille materials, audiotapes, and large-print textbooks;
- Professional services and guidance to ministries of education on an interprovincial, cooperative basis.
- Programs are tailored to the needs of the individual student and:
- Are designed to help these students learn to live independently in a non- sheltered environment;
- Are delivered by specially trained teachers;
- Follow the Ontario curriculum developed for all students in the province;
- Offer a full range of courses at the secondary level;
- Offer courses in special subject areas such as music, broad-based technology, family studies, physical education, and mobility training;
- Are individualized, to offer a comprehensive “life skills” program;
- Provide through home visiting for parents and families of preschool deaf-blind children to assist in preparing these children for future education;
- The Resource Services Library, which provides Braille and alternate print formats for students across Ontario. For more information on this service please go to aero.psbnet.ca;
- A learning centre that offers information to parents, students, educators and other professionals.

Provincial Schools for the Deaf

The following Provincial Schools offer services for deaf and hard-of-hearing students:

- Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in Belleville (serving eastern Ontario)
- Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton (serving central and northern Ontario)
- Robarts School for the Deaf in London (serving western Ontario)
- Centre Jules-Léger in Ottawa (serving francophone students and families throughout Ontario)
- The Provincial Schools Admission Committee in accordance with the requirements set out in Regulation 296 determines admittance to a Provincial School. These schools provide elementary and secondary school programs for deaf students from preschool level to high school graduation. The curriculum follows the Ontario curriculum and parallels courses and programs provided in school boards. Each student has their special needs met as set out in their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Schools for the Deaf

- Provide rich and supportive bilingual/bicultural educational environments which facilitate students' language acquisition, learning, and social development through American Sign Language (ASL) and English;
- In the elementary grades, the ASL curriculum is fully implemented to provide the student with an understanding of their first language (American Sign Language);
- Operate primarily as day schools;
- Provide residential facilities five days per week for those students who do not live within reasonable commuting distance from the school

Each school has a Resource Services Department, which provides:

- Consultation and educational advice to parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and school board personnel;
- Information brochures;
- A wide variety of workshops for parents, school boards, and other agencies;
- An extensive home-visiting program delivered to parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing preschool children by teachers trained in preschool and deaf education.

Provincial Schools for those with Learning Disabilities

Application for admission to a provincial Demonstration School is made on behalf of students by the school board, with parental consent. The Provincial Committee on Learning Disabilities (PCLD) determines whether a student is eligible for admission.

Although the primary responsibility to provide appropriate educational programs for students with learning disabilities remains with school boards, the Ministry of Education recognizes that some students require a residential school setting for a period of time. The Demonstrations Schools were established to:

- Provide special residential education programs for students between the ages of 5 and 21 years;
- Enhance the development of each student's academic and social skills;
- Develop the abilities of the students enrolled to a level that will enable them to return to programs operated by a local school board within two years
- Deliver specialized educational instruction;
- Residential services and programs;
- Specialized programming in association with Attention Deficit hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD);
- Teacher training and consultation services to school boards who have similar services and programs serving the needs of LD students in their local community.

In addition to providing residential schooling for students with severe learning disabilities, the provincial Demonstration Schools have special programs for students with severe learning disabilities in association with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD). These are highly intensive, one-year programs.

The mandate of these programs is to return students to their home boards at the end of one year (2 semesters). Service agreements will be signed by all parties shortly following admissions, and transition planning will be initiated during the first semester of the program.

Program interventions include

- Individualized instruction in academic and social skills;
- Frequent use of computers;
- Low stimulus, structured environments;
- Physical activities that promote pro-social and team values;
- Support and counseling programs that focus on understanding, accepting and coping with ADHD and learning disabilities;
- Cognitive behaviour modifications and cognitive behaviour therapy;
- Ongoing psychiatric assessment and monitoring by a specialist in this area;
- Effective medication control;
- Parent education and support groups that focus on understanding and managing behaviour; and
- A partnership with the home, the school board and the provincial demonstration school to facilitate the return of the student to an appropriate school placement, including teacher training in understanding and accommodating the needs of the ADHD student in the school setting.

Transportation

HWDSB provides transportation to and from Provincial Demonstration schools upon approval from a Superintendent of Student Achievement. Transportation to and from E.C. Drury or W. Ross Macdonald School occurs daily from a pupil’s residence to either E.C. Drury or W. Ross Macdonald respectively. With respect to Trillium Demonstration School, transportation occurs from a pupil’s residence Monday morning of the school week and return to a pupil’s residence on Friday afternoon of the same school week.

School for the Deaf and Deaf-Blind

W. Ross
Macdonald
School 350
Brant Avenue
Brantford ON
N3T 3J9 Phone:
(519) 759-0730

Schools for the Deaf

Ernest C. Drury School
255 Ontario Street South
Milton ON L9T 2M5
Phone: (905) 878-2851

TTY: (905) 878-7195

Robarts School
1090 Highbury Avenue
P.O. Box 7360, Station E
London ON N5Y 4V9

Phone & TTY: (519) 453-4400

Sir James Whitney School
350 Dundas Street West
Belleville ON K8P 1B2
Phone & TTY: (613) 967-2823

Francophone School for the Deaf and for those with Learning Disabilities

Centre Jules-
Léger 281
rue Lanark
Ottawa ON
K1Z 6R8
Phone (613) 761-9300
TTY: (613) 761-9302 & 761-9304

Demonstration Schools for English-speaking students with ADHD and Severe Learning Disabilities

Sagonaska School
350 Dundas Street West
Belleville ON K8P 1B2
Phone: (613) 967-2830

Trillium School
347 Ontario Street South
Milton ON L9T 3X9
Phone: (905) 878-8428

Amethyst School
1090 Highbury Ave
London ON N5Y 4V9
Phone: (519) 453-4408

Each provincial Demonstration School has an enrolment of forty students. The language of instruction at the Amethyst, Sagonaska, and Trillium schools is English; at Centre Jules-Léger, instruction is in French.

Number of Students from HWDSB Attending the Provincial Schools

School Name	Number of HWDSB Students Attending the School
E.C. Drury School for the Deaf	11
Trillium Demonstration School	4
W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind	15

Note: student placement in a Provincial School is reviewed annually.

The home school is responsible for compiling the application package. The Principal(s) of Special Education Services is responsible for submitting the application package to the provincial or demonstration school and acts as Board contact with the provincial or demonstration school.

THE BOARD’S CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is consulted in the development of this Plan including the programs and services provided by the board on an ongoing basis at SEAC meetings. SEAC members who represent local associations and community organizations are invited to provide input from their organizations. The final draft is presented to SEAC at the final June meeting.

Annually, the Special Education Plan undergoes an internal review by Special Education, Inclusion and Equity Staff to ensure compliance with the Special Education Plan Standards. Changes are incorporated into the revised Plan and then presented to SEAC. The Special Education Plan is then posted to the Board’s website [Special Education | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#)

Students who are part of the Special Education Student Advisory Circle are consulted on the development of a Student Friendly Version of the Plan. There is an opportunity for the broader community to provide [feedback](#) on the Special Education Plan .

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)

In accordance with Education Act Regulation 464/97, every district school board shall establish a Special Education Advisory Committee.

Names, Affiliations and Contact Information for Voting Members

PRIMARY MEMBERS	ALTERNATE MEMBERS
Judy Colantino, SEAC Chair Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton judycolantino@gmail.com	Laura Rudolph Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton laurainhamilton@hotmail.com
Lindsay Bray, SEAC Vice Chair McMaster Children's Hospital Developmental Pediatrics and Rehabilitation Portfolio braylind@hhsc.ca	
Danielle Dion-Broadley Hamilton FASD Collaborative Danielle.dion-broadley@contacthamilton.ca	
Maria Felix Miller, HWDSB Chair Trustee Ward 3 mfmiller@hwdsb.on.ca	Dawn Danko Trustee Ward 7 ddanko@hwdsb.on.ca
Melanie Roberts Association for Bright Children of Ontario melshops@hotmail.com	Cecile Santos-Ayrault Association for Bright Children of Ontario santosayrault.cecile@gmail.com
Nancy Silva Khan Autism Ontario (Central West Chapter) nancyosk@outlook.com	Michelle Campbell Autism Ontario (Central West Chapter) michelle.campbell@visiontravel.ca
Susi Owen CNIB Hamilton and Niagara susik.owen@gmail.com	
Sarah Pennington Community Living Hamilton spennington@clham.com	Tracy Sherriff Community Living Hamilton tsherriff@clham.com
Vanessa Doslea Lynwood Charlton Centre vdoslea@lynwoodcharlton.ca	
Samantha Sweet Centre for Diverse Learners samantha_sweet@diverselearners.ca	Carolyn Rankin-Boutin Centre for Diverse Learners carolyn@diverselearners.ca

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board SEAC has established the following parameters:

Mission Statement

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is committed to working in partnership with the staff and resources of the Board to ensure quality educational services for all students.

SEAC speaks on behalf for students with special education needs by:

- assisting students to receive the programs that meet their educational, social, physical, and emotional strengths and needs;
- advising the Board about evidence-based practices; and
- working to ensure that all students are welcomed and included within their schools.

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) meets on the last Wednesday of each month from September until June (unless otherwise noted). Meetings are open to anyone wishing to attend. SEAC meetings are held at the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Education Centre, 20 Education Court, Hamilton. The appropriate rules of the Board shall govern the order and conduct of the meetings of the Committee.

At the first meeting of the Committee following the Board's initial meeting, the members shall elect one of their members as chair and one of their members as vice-chair for a one-year term. The vote is conducted by secret ballot unless a member is acclaimed to a position. Recruitment of new members is conducted as needed.

HWDSB SEAC adheres to the following Code of Ethics:

- shall promote a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued;
- shall treat all other members and guests with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared without interruption;
- shall recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the committee, and of all persons in attendance at the meetings;
- shall act within the limits of the roles and responsibilities of the Special Education Advisory Committee as identified by the Education Act of Ontario, and by the Board of Education in the Terms of Reference;
- shall become familiar with the Board of Education policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them;
- shall acknowledge democratic principles and accept the consensus of the committee;
- shall use established communication channels when questions or concerns arise;
- shall promote high standards of ethical practice at all times

The development of the special education budget is based on ongoing and newly recognized needs. Budgetary development involves program considerations, negotiations, staffing levels and are developed in consultation between Special Education, Inclusion and Equity and Executive Council.

2026–2027 HWDSB Special Education Plan

SEAC's involvement in the budget process is supported by:

- presentations from the Associate Director of Finance and Facilities or Manager of Finance to attend SEAC meetings, upon the request of SEAC members and/or the suggestion of the Superintendent responsible for Special Education Services to give updates about funding and budget;
- presentations on information that affects the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board e.g. provincial grants, staffing needs;
- presentation on the overall budget for the upcoming school year and within it the Special Education budget

The Ministry of Education has created an e-Learning resource for SEAC. This [resource](#) is intended to provide information which assists SEAC in their advisory role to the school board.

How SEAC Influences School Board Policy

SEAC does not make final decisions, but it plays an important advisory role in shaping special education policies and services.

Providing Advice to the Board

- SEAC reviews school board policies, plans, and programs related to special education
- Members share recommendations and feedback based on their knowledge and community input
- The school board must consider SEAC's advice when making decisions

Reviewing the Special Education Plan

- Each year, SEAC reviews the board's Special Education Plan
- Members suggest changes or improvements
- This helps ensure services reflect student needs and best practices

Input on Budget Decisions

- SEAC receives updates about the special education budget
- Members ask questions and provide feedback on:
 - Funding priorities
 - Programs and services
- Their input helps guide how resources are used to support students

Bringing Parent and Community Voices Forward

- SEAC members often represent local organizations and families
- They bring forward:
 - Parent concerns
 - System barriers
 - Ideas for improvement
- This ensures policies reflect real experiences and needs

Promoting Best Practices and Inclusion

- SEAC encourages the use of evidence-based approaches
- Advocates for inclusive, equitable education for all students
- Helps the board stay aligned with Ministry expectations and current practices

Ongoing Monitoring and Discussion

Through monthly meetings, SEAC:

- Reviews updates on programs and services
- Asks questions and identifies gaps
- Suggests improvements over time

SEAC helps shape policies by:

- Advising the school board
- Sharing parent and community perspectives
- Promoting effective, inclusive practices

EARLY IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

What is Early Identification?

HWDSB believes it is important to identify and support students' learning needs as early as possible

- This process can begin before a child starts school
- It continues when the child enters school and throughout their education
- Ongoing assessment helps teachers understand how best to support each student

How Students Are Supported

The board follows research-based practices outlined in the Ministry document Learning for All (K–12). [Learning for all: a guide to effective assessment and instruction for all students, kindergarten to Grade 12 | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/learning-for-all)

This means:

- Teaching and supports are based on evidence and best practices
- Instruction is adjusted to meet each student's needs
- Support is provided early and consistently

Key Beliefs About Learning

HWDSB's approach is based on these important ideas:

- All students can succeed
- Every child learns in their own unique way
- Teaching should be based on research and experience
- Flexible teaching methods (e.g., adapting lessons) help all learners
- Classroom teachers play a key role in student success
- Teachers work with families and others to support students
- Fairness means giving each student what they need, not treating everyone the same

Working Together

Supporting students is a team effort. Schools work closely with:

- Parents/guardians
- School staff and educators
- Community partners

This collaboration helps ensure each child receives the right support at the right time.

Early identification helps schools:

- Understand your child's needs early
- Provide timely support
- Improve learning and well-being over time

PARENT AND EDUCATOR ROLES IN EARLY IDENTIFICATION

The Parent/Guardian or Caregiver Role

Parents/guardians, and caregivers are important partners in understanding a child's needs. You can:

- Share your observations about your child's learning and development
- Inform the school about any services or supports your child receives outside of school
- Maintain open and ongoing communication with your child's teacher
- Your insights help build a clearer picture of your child's strengths and needs.

The Educator Role

Teachers work closely with families to get to know each student. They:

- Observe and assess student learning on an ongoing basis
- Use screening tools and classroom evidence to understand needs
- Plan and adjust instruction to support all learners

In Kindergarten, educators use the Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) framework to support understanding of development and learning.

Communication Between Home and School

Strong communication helps support student success. Schools will:

- Share updates through progress reports and report cards
- Communicate informally (e.g., conversations, emails, meetings)
- Keep families informed about learning, growth, and next steps

Early identification works best when parents and educators work together by:

- Sharing information
- Communicating regularly
- Supporting each child's unique learning journey

How Early Identification Works

Before Your Child Starts School

- Kindergarten registration (Countdown to Kindergarten) opens in February
- Parents/guardians, or caregivers complete forms that share:
 - Basic information about your child
 - Strengths, needs, and experiences

You are encouraged to complete a developmental screening tool (Nipissing)

If you have concerns, you can connect with a doctor or childcare provider before school starts

Starting School

If your child has identified needs or has received supports before school, you may be invited to an Entry to School Meeting. This helps the school learn more about your child and plan supports

Ongoing Communication

Teachers and families stay in regular contact. Together, you share information to better understand your child's learning and needs

If Concerns Arise

If your child is having difficulty:

- The teacher will talk with you about their observations
- You will learn about:
 - Supports happening at school
 - Ways to help at home

The teacher continues to collect information about your child's progress

School Team Support

If additional help is needed:

Your child may be discussed at a school team meeting (principal, teacher, learning resource teacher)

The team will:

- Review progress and assessment information
- Recommend strategies, supports, or further assessments

You will be kept informed throughout the process

Case Conference (If Needed)

You may be invited to a meeting with school staff and special education staff. Together, you will discuss next steps and possible supports

Special Education Programs & IPRC

You may be notified if your child is being considered for:

- Special education programs or services
- An IPRC meeting (if needed)

IPRC referrals usually happen later in elementary school, unless needs are clear earlier

You will receive:

- Written notice
- A Parent Guide to IPRC

Early identification is a step-by-step, team process:

- Start early
- Communicate often
- Adjust supports as needed

Families and schools work together to ensure each child gets the support they need to succeed.

Assessment Tools and Strategies

How Schools Assess Learning

Schools use a variety of ways to understand how students are learning. Teachers gather information through:

- Observations (what they see in class)
- Conversations (discussions with students)
- Student work (assignments, tests, projects)

What Teachers Do

Teachers plan assessment as part of everyday learning. They:

- Share learning goals and success criteria with students
- Check learning before, during, and after lessons

Use assessment to:

- Guide teaching
- Plan next steps
- Help students track their own progress
- Provide clear and timely feedback
- Help students learn to self-assess and reflect

Why Assessment Matters

Assessment helps:

- Improve student learning
- Keep students engaged
- Ensure parents and students understand progress

Classroom Assessments

Teachers use a range of tools to:

- Identify learning needs
- Monitor progress
- Adjust teaching

These tools are selected from approved board resources and support students in:

- Setting goals
- Monitoring progress
- Improving learning

When Additional Assessment Is Needed

If more information is required, students may receive additional assessments:

School-Based Assessments

- Conducted by a Learning Resource Teacher (LRT)
- May include standardized tools (e.g., reading, writing, math assessments)

Specialized Assessments

If needed, the school may recommend assessments by specialists, such as:

- Psychology services
- Speech and language services
- Autism or neurodevelopmental services
- These help better understand how to support your child

Parent/Guardian, Caregiver Consent

Your written permission is always required before any formal assessments beyond the classroom are completed

Assessment is an ongoing process that helps:

- Understand your child's learning
- Guide teaching and supports
- Ensure your child gets the help they need to succeed

Early Intervention Strategies

HWDSB provides a range of supports to help students early on, before considering a formal IPRC process.

Support Starts in the Classroom

The first level of support happens in your child’s regular classroom

Teachers adjust:

- What they teach (content)
- How they teach (process)
- How students show learning (product)

This flexible approach helps meet the needs of all learners

Additional School Supports

- The Learning Resource Teacher (LRT) may support the classroom teacher with strategies and planning
- School teams may work together to better support your child

Targeted Programs and Interventions

Students may participate in specialized, evidence-based programs, such as:

- Empower™ Reading
- Other targeted supports based on student needs
- Language Intervention Through Engaging Stories (LITES)

Specialized Services

Students may receive support from specialists, as appropriate, including:

- Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs)
- Communicative Disorder Assistants (CDAs)
- English language (ESL/ELL) supports
- Behavioural supports and other targeted interventions

Collaboration and Community Support

- Schools may work with board specialists and community agencies
- Parents/guardians are part of the team and kept informed throughout

Early intervention focuses on:

- Providing support as soon as needs are noticed
- Using a range of strategies and services
- Helping students succeed within their regular classroom whenever possible

References

Ministry of Education (2026). [Kindergarten Curriculum](#)

Ministry of Education (2013). [Policy and Program Memorandum 155](#): Diagnostic Assessment in Support of Student Learning.

Ministry of Education (2010). [Growing Success](#): Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools.

Ministry of Education (2014). Excerpts from [ELECT](#): Foundational knowledge from the 2007 publication of Early Learning for Every Child Today: A framework for Ontario early childhood settings.

Ministry of Education (1982). [Policy and Program Memorandum 11](#): Early Identification of Children’s Learning Needs.

EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS

Everyday Classroom Assessment

Assessment is a regular part of teaching and learning. Teachers use it to understand how students are doing and how best to support them.

Teachers may use:

- Observations
- Conversations and discussions
- Student work (assignments, journals, tests)
- Reading assessments and classroom-based tools

These assessments are part of regular learning, so parent/guardian consent is not required. You will be kept informed through report cards, progress reports, and meetings.

Reading and Learning Supports

- Schools use a variety of tools to support reading development and learning
- These help teachers adjust instruction and provide targeted supports

Provincial Assessments (EQAO)

Students take EQAO assessments at key points:

- Grade 3: Reading, writing, math
- Grade 6: Reading, writing, math
- Grade 9: Math
- Grade 10: Literacy

These assessments help understand how students are progressing across the province.

Specialized Assessments (With Consent)

If more information is needed, the school may recommend assessments by specialists such as:

- Psychoeducational Consultants
- Speech-language Pathologists
- Behaviour Analysts

Your written consent is always required before these assessments take place
Information is shared only with your permission

Psychological Services

Psychological assessments help understand your child's:

- Learning and thinking skills
- Academic abilities
- Social and emotional development
- Assessments are usually completed within about a year of referral
- Results are shared with you through a meeting or phone call, along with a written report

Speech and Language Services

Speech-language assessments help understand how your child:

- Communicates
- Understands language
- Uses speech
- While waiting for assessment, students still receive classroom strategies and support
- You will be involved in the process and share information about your child's communication at home
- Results are shared with you and, with consent, relevant school staff

Privacy and Consent

Your child's information is kept confidential

Written consent is required before:

- Any specialized assessment
- Sharing information with outside agencies

Assessment helps schools:

- Understand your child's strengths and needs
- Guide teaching and supports
- Work with families to support student success

COORDINATION OF SERVICES WITH OTHER MINISTRIES OR AGENCIES

Entry to School

HWDSB works closely with community agencies and government services to support students with special needs, especially when they are starting school.

When a child has identified developmental or medical needs before entering Kindergarten, families may be invited to an Entry to School meeting. This meeting helps ensure a smooth and well-planned transition by bringing together parents/guardians and school staff to share important information about the child.

Families are encouraged to provide details about their child's strengths, needs, interests, any assessments or reports, equipment they use, and any agencies already involved in their care. The school reviews this information, accepts relevant assessments from community partners, and may complete additional assessments if needed.

Based on this shared understanding, staff plan appropriate supports and programming for the child's start at school. Depending on the child's needs, the meeting may include the principal, learning resource teacher, speech-language pathologist, and special education staff.

The overall goal is to work collaboratively with families and community partners to ensure the right supports are in place and to create a positive and successful transition into school.

Connections for Students with Autism

This is a short-term, collaborative program that supports children and youth with autism as they transition between home, clinical settings, and school.

It is a partnership between McMaster Children’s Hospital and local school boards, including HWDSB, and is available to students registered in the Ontario Autism Program (OAP), either when they are entering school from a clinical setting or when they need additional support with transitions during the school year.

The program typically runs for about nine weeks and focuses on sharing information about the student’s strengths, needs, and successful strategies across home, clinical, and school environments.

During this time, the Connections team may gather information from families, school staff, and any service providers working with the child, and may include observations at home or at school if needed.

Meetings are held with parents/guardians and the school team to develop practical strategies that can be used in the classroom and at home, with follow-up consultations to monitor progress and adjust supports. The team is led by the school principal (or designate) and includes parents/guardians, classroom staff, learning resource teachers, special education staff, and an autism consultant from McMaster Children’s Hospital, along with any other relevant professionals.

The goal of the program is to build shared understanding, create consistent approaches, and support a smooth transition that helps the student feel comfortable and successful at school.

After the Connections for Students process is complete, HWDSB staff continue to provide ongoing support and follow-through on strategies in the classroom to ensure the student’s continued growth and success.

Ontario Autism Entry to School (ETS) Program

This program helps children with autism build the skills they need to start school successfully.

Delivered locally by McMaster Children’s Hospital, the program offers a six-month, half-day group program with a small class size (up to 10 children, with two staff for every child)/embed support in the child’s community program. Children take part in activities that support important school-readiness skills such as communication, play, social interaction, daily routines, behaviour, and early learning skills like attention and pre-academics.

In addition to the group program, families receive individualized support and guidance during the transition into school, including consultation during the first six months of school.

With parent/guardian consent, information is shared between the ETS program and the school to help ensure a smooth transition. HWDSB staff work closely with the ETS team and families to build consistent strategies and supports, similar to the Connections for Students approach, so that each child is set up for a positive and successful start to school

ETS vs CONNECTIONS

Feature	ETS Program	Connections for Students
When	Before & during school entry	Bridges the gap between clinical services and school for students with autism
Length	6 months	9 weeks (short-term)
Focus	Building school-readiness skills	Supporting smooth transitions/ sharing of strategies
What happens	Small group learning, routines, play-based skill building	Meetings, strategy sharing, observations, follow-up
Skills/Support	Communication, social skills, behaviour, early learning	Consistency, shared strategies, collaboration
Who is involved	Child, staff, autism specialists	Parents, teachers, school staff, autism consultants
Goal	Prepare child for school	Help teams support the child

How They Work Together

A child may participate in ETS first to build readiness skills. Then use Connections for Students to support a smooth transition into the classroom

Urgent Response Services (URS) provide short-term support for children and youth with autism who are experiencing a serious or urgent challenge.

- Available to students registered in the Ontario Autism Program (OAP)
- Offers up to 12 weeks of free support

What URS Can Help With

URS supports families when a child is experiencing behaviours that:

- Could lead to harm to themselves, others, or property
- Are causing a crisis or urgent situation

The goal is to:

- Stabilize the situation
- Prevent escalation
- Keep everyone safe

What Support May Include

URS may provide:

- Short-term consultation with professionals
- Support for families, school staff, and service providers
- Strategies for managing behaviour and supporting the child
- Respite support (temporary relief for families)

Supports are coordinated with your child’s home, school, and support team.

How to Access URS

- Families can reach out directly or with support from the school
- School staff can help with a referral with parent/guardian consent
- In the Hamilton area, URS is provided by Contact Brant

How It Works

- Services are short-term and focused on immediate needs
- The process is similar to Connections for Students, with teamwork and shared planning
- Everyone works together to create consistent strategies

URS provides quick, short-term help during urgent situations, working with families and schools to support safety and well-being.

Education and Community Partnership Programs (ECPP) and Care and Treatment Education Programs (CTEP)

These programs provide specialized support for students with complex needs, ensuring they can continue learning while receiving the care and services they need.

ECPP supports students in youth justice settings, while CTEP supports students who need treatment or mental health support alongside school.

Both programs ensure students continue learning with the supports they need.

Feature	ECPP (Education & Community Partnership)	CTEP (Care & Treatment Education)
Who it supports	Students in youth justice settings (court-ordered)	Students with significant mental health or treatment needs
Main purpose	Continue education during justice involvement	Provide education alongside care and treatment
Partners	Youth justice facilities, community agencies, social services	Mental health agencies, healthcare providers, treatment centres
School connection	Education provided within justice setting	Student remains connected to home school
Privacy	Protected under Youth Criminal Justice Act	Confidential and protected student information
Goal	Keep students learning during placement	Support both well-being and learning

SPECIALIZED HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

HWDSB works in partnership with Ontario Health atHome School Health Support Services and the Ron Joyce Children’s Health Centre to ensure students receive the medical and therapy supports they need to take part in school.

Through referrals and collaboration with these agencies, students may receive services such as nursing care, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language support, nutrition services, and assistance with medical procedures (e.g., medication, feeding, mobility support).

With proper training, school staff can also help with daily needs like lifting, positioning, feeding, and toileting. Information about the types of services available, how students qualify, and when support may no longer be needed is available through the board.

Specialized Health Support Services

Specialized Health Support Service	Agency or position of person who performs the service	Eligibility criteria for students to receive the service	Position of person who determines eligibility to receive the service and the level of support	Criteria for determining when the service is no longer required	Procedures for resolving disputes about eligibility and level of support (if available)
Nursing	Ontario Health atHome- School Health Services	Nursing service is determined based on the nursing intervention and the independence of the pupil	Ontario Health atHome School Health Services Care Coordinator	Based on independence of patient or when the medical intervention is no longer needed	School and or family can raise disputes around eligibility or level of care with the School Health Services care coordinator. If concerns cannot be resolved, then the manager through Ontario Health atHome can intervene. Internal complaints mechanism exists or the Action Line of the MOHLTC can be called.
Occupational therapy	McMaster Children's Hospital-Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre through Ron Joyce staff and SE Health, contracted Service Provider	OT health based consultative services determined for child to access the curriculum by attending school. Services include the recommendation and training on equipment for lifting and positioning, mobility, fine motor, OT support for school staff to assist student	MCH-RJCHC Co-ordinator School Based Rehabilitation Services	Based on change in student's condition (i.e. Student has achieved goals), student's needs have changed and service is no longer appropriate, physical environment is no longer appropriate to service delivery	School or family can contact MCH- RJCHC SBRS Intake clinician around eligibility concerns or level of care. If concerns cannot be resolved, manager/coordinator can intervene Internal complaints via Patient Experience
Physiotherapy	McMaster Children's Hospital-Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre through CBI and SE Health, contracted Service Providers	PT consultative services determined in order for child to access the curriculum by attending school, PT support for school staff to assist student	MCH-RJCHC Co-ordinator School Based Rehabilitation Services	Based on change in student's condition (i.e. student has achieved goals), student's needs have changed and service is no longer appropriate, physical environment is no longer appropriate to service delivery	School or family can contact MCH- RJCHC SBRS Intake clinician around eligibility concerns or level of care. If concerns cannot be resolved, manager/coordinator can intervene. Internal complaints via Patient Experience

2026–2027 HWDSB Special Education Plan

Nutrition	Registered Dieticians Provided by the Ontario Health atHome	Concerns in regards to a pupil's nutrition intake that are school based	Ontario Health at Home School Health Services Care coordinator	Programming has been provided and implemented and or patient has improved and no longer requires services	
Speech and language therapy Speech, Voice, and Fluency (PPM 81) Speech and Language-School Board Speech correction and remediation	McMaster Children's Hospital-Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre through Ron Joyce staff and SE Health, contracted Service Providers Speech Language Pathologists, Communicative Disorders Assistants, employees of HWDSB See above	Referral from School Board SLP Students have to have moderate delays in speech or voice or fluency disorders Referral from classroom educators with consent from parents/guardians	MCH-RJCHC Intake Clinician Superintendent of Special Education, Inclusion and Equity and System Principal: Intervention in Reading & Writing	Student has achieved goal (s); Student is no longer moderate or more significant level of need, self-regulation needs not conducive to therapy Student no longer requires the service due to achieving the goal(s); educators/parents do not have a need	School or family can contact MCH- RJCHC SBRS Intake clinician around eligibility concerns or level of care. If concerns cannot be resolved, manager/coordinator can intervene. Internal complaints via Patient Experience Parents/guardians would speak to their educator and SLP to resolve the issue; if the issue is not resolved they would speak to the Principal and System Principal: Intervention in Reading & Writing. If not resolved at that point, speak to their SOSA for their school
Administering of prescribed medications	Medication that is administered via injection is a nurses' role. Nursing is provided by the Ontario Health at Home School Health Services Medication administered orally is the responsibility of the school board Pupil or parent can also administer	Nursing service is determined based on the nursing intervention and the independence of the pupil	Ontario Health Home School Health Services are coordinator	Intervention is no longer required, changes from deep to shallow or pupil becomes independent in own care	School and or family can raise disputes around eligibility or level of care with the Ontario Health at Home care coordinator. If concerns cannot be resolved then manager can intervene. Internal complaints mechanism exists or the Action Line of the MOHLTC can be called

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

HWDSB is committed to ongoing learning for staff to improve outcomes for students, especially those requiring special education programs and services.

Staff receive training in a variety of ways, including:

- In-class support, where specialists work directly with teachers and students
- Board-led learning, such as workshops, online modules, and guest speakers
- External training opportunities, including conferences and specialized programs

Staff also receive training in key areas such as:

- Behaviour management strategies
- Assistive technology to support student learning
- Professional learning is guided by the Ministry of Education’s Learning for All (K–12) framework and is tailored to meet the needs of students across the system.
- In addition, HWDSB offers programs like the Educational Assistant Onboarding Program, which includes hands-on learning experiences such as job shadowing.
- Staff participate in ongoing training and learning to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to support all students effectively.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA)

Accessibility of School Buildings

HWDSB is committed to improving accessibility to its buildings, grounds, and administrative offices. The HWDSB multi-year Capital Plan incorporates budgeting to increase the overall accessibility of the facilities through ongoing maintenance repairs, Capital project expenditures and special accommodations projects. Given the large inventory and age of the facilities, various factors are considered in developing the plan such as Facility Condition Index, results of Pupil Accommodation Reviews, proximity and special accommodation requests. The Facilities Services Division works closely with Special Education, Inclusion and Equity to create, monitor and continually update the plan.

With Capital Priorities projects underway, all new HWDSB facilities are designed and constructed to the latest Accessibility requirements identified in the Ontario Building Code. In addition to new construction, the multi-year plan includes:

- Barrier Free Parking
- Barrier Free path of travel
- Installation of door operators
- Barrier Free and universal washrooms and changerooms
- Installation of lifts and elevators

The following is a summary of the Board’s progress to date:

2025-2026	2026-2027
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned renovations of existing washrooms and changerooms to accommodate accessibility ▪ Planned installation of stage lifts at various locations ▪ Planned integration of accessible parking where feasible ▪ Planned renovations of existing exterior and doors ▪ Interior signate updates to include Braille during interior renovations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to plan renovations of existing washrooms and changerooms to accommodate accessibility ▪ Continue to plan integration of single use universal washroom ▪ Continue to plan integration of single use accessible changerooms ▪ Continue to plan installation of stage lifts where required ▪ Continue to integrate accessible parking where feasible ▪ Continue to plan renovations of existing ramps and doors ▪ Continue to complete interior signage updates to include Braille during renovations

For more information, the public can access the HWDSB Long Term Facilities Plan through the following link [Long-Term Facilities Plan | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#)

Physical

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board continues to access the Ministry of Education Special Equipment Allocation (SEA) funding, which assists with the costs of equipment essential to support students with special education needs.

Each year the Board allocates an amount from the annual School Renewal Grant (SRG) provided by the Ministry of Education, to address school accessibility issues (ie: washroom upgrades, auditorium upgrades, etc), or to meet the emerging needs of a specific ability (accessibility upgrades – ramps, visible fire alarms, acoustic treatments, etc).

A Student Facilities Accommodation Request Form (SFARF) and process were introduced to the system to assist in responding to student specific accessibility requests.

Systemic

As policies/procedures are developed and/or revised, they will be examined to reflect Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board directions regarding accessibility.

System staff in leadership roles continue to enhance learning and understanding related to Human Rights.

Update 2026 – The following Policies were updated and reviewed using the [HWDSB Human Rights Impact Assessment Tool](#) :

- Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy
- Barrier-Free Physical Learning Environment Policy

In addition, during 2025/26 staff developed and implemented a system-wide approach to tracking hate and human rights incidents (including disability) to identify trends and publicly report the data.

PARENT GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Education is a responsibility shared by parents/guardians, school staff, and the students themselves. Regular, ongoing communication, initiated by families or staff, is a valued part of the team approach. Students, parents/guardians, and educators all play important roles in the planning and implementation of a student's special education program.

Special Education, Inclusion and Equity information for parents/guardians is available on the HWDSB website [Special Education | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#)

HWDSB has developed A Guide for Parents and Guardians to the Identification, Placement and Review Committee. [Special Education | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#)

This information is available in multiple languages to better support families in the HWDSB community.

The HWDSB website includes the Guide for Parents/Guardians to the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) and the Special Education Plan.

Families are encouraged to review these resources, as they provide helpful information about special education programs, services, and supports.

If you need more information or have questions after reviewing the materials, please contact your child's school directly. You can also call 905-527-5092 to be connected with the appropriate department.

Printed copies of the guide are available upon request through your school or by contacting the Special Education, Inclusion and Equity Department.