



Special Education Terms used in Ontario Schools

This fact sheet contains definitions for commonly used terms in special education in Ontario. Individual school boards may use different terms and you may need to check with the Principal, or in your school board's Special Education Plan, for the terms and definitions used by your school board.

Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills : is an educational tool used frequently with Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to measure the basic linguistic and functional skills of an individual with developmental delays or communication disabilities.

Accommodations : Refer to the teaching strategies, supports, and/or services that are required in order for a student to access the curriculum and demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not alter the Provincial Learning Expectations, rather they reflect what is different from what is provided for other students in the class.

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) : The science of applying experimentally derived principles of behavior to improve socially significant behavior. ABA takes what we know about behavior and uses it to bring about positive change (Applied). Behaviors are defined in observable and measurable terms in order to assess change over time (Behavior). The behavior is analyzed within the environment to determine what factors are influencing the behavior (Analysis).

Assessments: An assessment of your child requires your permission, usually in writing. An assessment may involve: an observation of your child in class, a review of your child's work as well as school (see 'OSR') and medical records, the administration of individual tests, and interview with parents and teachers. A report is written summarizing the findings with recommendations for programming strategies, further intervention or for referral to the Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC). Parents receive a copy of the report and, as well, a copy is placed in your child's school RECORD (OSR). The types of assessments that may be completed include speech-language pathology, psychology and educational.

Bill 82: This law, introduced in 1980 in Ontario, requires school boards to provide special education programs. It is now known as the Education Amendment Act and is part of the Education Act, which governs all education in Ontario. Under the Act, all school boards must provide or purchase special education programs and services for all school age children regardless of exceptionality.

Case Conference: A case conference is a meeting held at school to discuss your child's needs. It will include all professionals involved with your child, such as his/her teacher(s), support staff and school administrators. Parents may choose to bring someone with them to take notes or speak on their behalf. The purpose of the meeting is usually to problem solve or plan before your child MAY BE discussed at an IPRC committee.

Curriculum: The province of Ontario has outlined the program, or curriculum, that must be followed to educate children at each grade level. The curriculum describes the expectations (skills and knowledge) that students must acquire as well as the achievement level (mark or grade). The curriculum is divided into different subject areas (Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, etc.) for both elementary and high school students.

Developmentally Disabled (Challenged, Handicapped): Children who are described as developmentally disabled have learning needs that require highly specialized support and assistance. Children may have medical or health needs, may have difficulty communicating and extreme difficulty learning. These needs are usually identified by the IPRC and special education support services are provided.

Education Act: The Education Act is the provincial law that governs education in Ontario. All school boards must operate according to this law. The Act includes:

- ***Legislation:*** These are the overall laws, passed as Bills by government, regarding education

- ***Regulations:*** These are made by the Minister of Education to expand on the Education Act and give more details about how the Act is to be applied.

- ***Memoranda:*** These are instructions issued to schools and boards. They are sub-divided into Policy-Program, Business and Safety. They are issued by the Deputy Ministers of Education and are valid until revoked.

- ***Monographs:*** These are issued to provide strong suggestions or clarification on contentious issues. They are not binding, but are viewed to be important.

Educational Assistant /Educational Support Personnel : This term describes staff hired by school boards to work with individual students under the supervision of the classroom teacher. There is no specific training for Education Assistants, although some may have college or university training. Education Assistants may work with an individual or groups of students for part or all of the school day.

Exceptional Student: According to Ontario law (the Education Act), an exceptional student is a student who has been formally identified by an Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC). An exceptional student has significant needs in the areas of behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical or multiple disabilities and meets the provincial and school board criteria for identification. A student who has been identified as 'exceptional' must be provided with the supports and services required to meet the exceptional needs. In addition, an Individual Education Plan must be developed for the student within 30 days of identification at an IPRC.

Identification and Placement Review Committee (I.P.R.C.): The IPRC is a committee made up of three persons appointed by the school board (at least one of the committee must be the principal or superintendent). This committee identifies a student's exceptional

learning needs and recommends the special education placement for the student. The IPRC also documents students' strengths and needs, which is sometimes called the profile statement. The IPRC can also recommend support services and equipment. The IPRC process is outlined in a Ministry of Education regulation (Regulation 181/98) and includes an appeal mechanism for parents who are not satisfied with the decision.

Identified : A student that has been identified as “exceptional” through the IPRC process and formal assessment documental indicating an exceptionality.

Non-Identified : A student that has an IEP and accesses Special Education Services, but has NOT been formally identified as an “exceptional student”.

Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.): The IEP is the plan that outlines the assistance provided to students. It is developed by the school, in consultation with the parents. It must include specific educational expectations based on the curriculum, an outline of the special education program and services that will be received, and a statement about the methods by which the student's progress is reviewed. The IEP must be completed within 30 school days after a student has been placed in a special education program. Parents must receive a copy of the IEP.

Learning Disability: This term is used to describe students who exhibit learning and academic difficulties that are greater than would be expected from assessed intellectual ability. A psychologist usually diagnoses a learning disability. The learning disability may include difficulties with the use of spoken language, reading/writing, non-verbal learning disability, and/or mathematics.

Modifications : Refer to the changes that are made to grade-level expectations for a subject or course in the Ontario Curriculum in order to meet the needs of the student. Modified expectations may be drawn from a different grade level, or they may include increases or decreases o the number and/or complexity of the grade-level expectations.

Ontario School Record (O.S.R.): This is the student file that contains all documents on your child. The contents of the OSR and access to the information are authorized by the Education Act. Report cards and assessment reports are kept in the OSR. Your child's teacher(s), the principal, and others working with your child have access to the OSR. Parents can ask to see the contents of the OSR by contacting the Principal.

Parent Guide: Every school board is required to develop a guide for parents that outlines the special education services provided, as well as the procedures for the IPRC, deciding the student's placement, or appealing these decisions.

Placement: The term '**placement**' can refer to a program offered to a student in a regular classroom or may refer to an alternative location within the school board, purchased from another school board or in a provincial school. Placement options (as defined by the Ministry of Education) may include:

Fully self contained classroom where a small group of students with similar needs are together for the majority of the day.

Partially integrated or partially self-contained when a student is in a regular class for at least one class but not more than 50% of the day. The remainder of the student's time is in a self contained class.

Withdrawal assistance when a student is withdrawn from the regular class, for less than 50% of the day, for instruction from a Special Education Teacher in a small class or individually.

Resource assistance when the student is receiving direct specialized instruction, individually or in small groups, in the regular classroom.

Indirect services where special consultative services are provided to the classroom teacher only.

Provincial Demonstration Schools: The Ministry of Education operates special schools throughout Ontario for children who are deaf, blind, deaf-blind, and severely learning disabled, as well as those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Most of these programs are residential regardless of where the student lives.

Psychological Services (Psychologist and Psychometrist/psychological associate): School psychologists, psychometrists, or psychological associates are the personnel charged with administering psychological and educational tests. Psychologists and psychological associates interpret results and assist with behaviour management; provide counselling, and consult with school staff.

Resource Withdrawal (Resource Room): This is a special education program where the student is in the regular program for most of the day, but is also withdrawn from the classroom for regularly scheduled assistance from a Special Education Teacher.

School Health Support Program: This refers to services provided within schools for students with health needs. The program is funded by the Ministry of Health and often administered through the local Community Care Access Centre (CCAC). The types of services provided include nursing care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy for students with specified medical needs who meet the criteria for these services. An application form is initiated by the school and requires parent consent.

School Team: This team is composed of teachers and support staff for the school. The purpose of the team is to plan for students with special needs within each school. Children should not be discussed at the school without the parents' knowledge and consent. Parents of children being discussed are usually invited to attend the team meeting. These teams have various terms in different boards. Your child's principal can let you know the proper term (e.g., Program Development Team, In-School Team, School Based Support Team).

Special Education Funding: Special Education is funded in two different ways in Ontario:

□ ***Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA)***: School boards receive money from the Ontario government based on the number of students enrolled in their school board. This funding is intended to cover the education costs for students with mild learning needs.

□ ***Special Equipment Amount (SEA)***: With proper documentation and professional recommendations, school boards can apply for SEA funding to assist with the cost of recommended specialized equipment for students.

Special Education Program: Special education programs range from support programs for students in regular classroom settings to self contained classes. Across Ontario, there is a trend toward integrating special education students into regular classes. The Ministry of Education supports integration whenever possible but requires school boards to maintain a range of special education placements. Students in a special education program must have an individual education plan (IEP).

Special Education Services: These are the resources, including support staff and equipment, needed to develop and implement a special education program.

Special Education Teacher (Education or Learning Resource Teacher): Special Education Teachers have additional training in the education of students with exceptional learning needs. They are usually assigned to work with groups of students throughout the school day. Some Special Education Teachers work with a specific group of students for the majority of the school day (e.g., learning disabled, language impaired, multiple handicapped). In addition, Special Education Teachers may also look after IPRC preparation, arrange case conferences, assist in ongoing assessment, evaluation and reporting, facilitate placements, act as a liaison with service agencies and arrange for transportation.

Special Education Consultant: This is a Special Education Teacher who has specialized training to carry out academic and intellectual tests. Sometimes these individuals are assigned to provide assistance to specific programs within the school board (e.g., physical disabilities).

Special Education Advisory Committee (S.E.A.C.): Every school board is required to have a SEAC. This committee is composed of parent associations, such as the Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD), as well as community representatives, called Members - at - Large) and school board Trustees. The purpose of this committee, which usually meets on a monthly basis, is to advise the school board on special education issues. Meetings are open to members of the public and information about SEAC is usually included on the school board's Website.

Transition Plan: This term usually refers to the change from elementary school to high school. Every student in Ontario at age 14 must have a transition plan which outlines what is in place to assist the student to prepare for the world of work, further study, or life in the community. Transition planning may also be used to describe the preparation for moving from preschool to elementary school.