

SUMMARY OF WORKING TABLE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTRY

1. Student Success and Access to Curriculum

Goal: Improved learning for all students receiving special education programs and services.

- Coordinate all ministry initiatives related to improving student achievement (e.g., Student Success, Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat) to include students who have special education needs.
- Require all curriculum documents and related forms (such as report cards) to address the needs of the full range of learners in the school system.
- Develop resources related to effective instructional practices or program indicators for educators based on specific learning profiles and/or areas of need.
- Continue to refine and develop appropriate measures to assess and track progress of those students who have modified curriculum expectations and/or alternative programs, including measures for pre-Grade 1 and alternative skills.
- Investigate, share, and implement effective transition practices for students with special education needs. Multiple transition points such as entry to school, between schools, between elementary and secondary panels, and school to postsecondary destinations should be characterized by collaboration between professionals, family and student and by coordination of service providers.

2. Professional Development

Goal: Increased capacity of all staff to educate a wider range of learners.

- Require, through the Ontario College of Teachers, the completion of a minimum of a half-course on special education before issuing an Ontario teaching certificate.
- Provide direction and funding for specific and systematic professional development related to special education for teachers, teachers' assistants, principals, supervisory officers, and other staff. Topics would include universal design, differentiated instruction, effective teaching and curriculum-based assessment strategies, collaborative problem-solving approaches and assistive technology. In-service should be offered in collaboration with professional associations whenever possible. Opportunities should also be provided for parents to access information and resources.
- Coordinate all professional development opportunities to include effective

practices that would benefit students with special education needs.

- Use the results from the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) Special Education Projects of 2005–06, as well as other education research initiatives, to identify training gaps and to inform a provincial professional development strategy, where appropriate.
- Establish standards that define roles and responsibilities for teachers' assistants. Training requirements should be established following a review of current diploma/apprenticeship options. Training for teachers' assistants should be accessible province-wide.
- Require completion of the Additional Qualification Course, Special Education, Specialist, or the equivalent, for educators and school administrators specifically responsible for special education programs and services, such as learning support teachers and teachers of special education classes.

3. Identification and Support Options

Goal: Improve the balance between the focus on learning and the need for appropriate processes, documentation, and accountability.

- Ensure that school boards provide appropriate special education programs and services for students awaiting completion of the IPRC process.
- Revise IPRC and IEP policy to promote effective parent participation, streamline processes, and reduce administrative burden, while ensuring a focus on student needs and outcomes.
- Mandate and support the implementation of a provincial IEP template. Provide direction and training to maximize the effectiveness of IEP usage as set out in *The Individual Education Plan (IEP) – A Resource Guide (2004)*.

4. Service Integration

Goal: Develop capacity to build more cooperative connections between schools, agencies, and families of children facing learning and behavioural challenges.

- Create a multi-ministry framework, led by the education sector, that supports an integrated service delivery and funding model and the identification of measurable outcomes related to the delivery of an integrated service to students with special education needs.
- Reduce the barriers to service delivery and ensure shared funding and a commitment that services would be provided regardless of traditional roles of ministries, institutions, and agencies.

- Require that school boards work collaboratively with service providers.

5. Parent Collaboration

Goal: Enhance collaborative relationships between educators and parents and reduce conflict in the system.

- Require training for educators and administrators on effective IPRC practices and IEP development, implementation, and monitoring that focuses on collaborative communication with parents in pre-service, inservice, and professional development programs.
- Require school boards to develop, with input from their Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC), informal dispute resolution processes for issues related to programs and services for students with special education needs. A mandatory dispute resolution process should also be developed for use when all school and district attempts to resolve issues have been exhausted. School boards and parents would have access to trained and culturally sensitive mediators.
- Include targeted support for parents of students with special education needs in the mandate of the provincial Parent Engagement Office.
- Conduct research on effective parent involvement in decision-making on special education programs and services.

6. Accountability and Reporting

Goal: Improve the balance between the focus on learning and the need for appropriate processes, documentation, and accountability.

- Revise the ministry's standards for special education board plans to ensure that the plans align with and complement other school and board improvement plans. Revisions would focus on setting targets to improve program planning and accountability for student achievement and extend the use of effective instructional/assessment practices. This revised focus would mean less emphasis on descriptions of special education and services in board plans.
- Require schools and school boards as part of their improvement plans to include special education as an integral part of their strategy towards improving student achievement.
- Develop a provincial framework for conducting cyclical reviews of school boards with respect to their special education practices. Elicit information related to parent, SEAC, and community satisfaction with the delivery of programs and services. Track resource allocation, program delivery, outcomes for students and integrated service delivery at both the elementary and secondary levels.

- Revise provincial report card policy to better align with IEP requirements. Require schools to include IEP expectations with report card for the purposes of keeping parents informed. Include an option for indicating that a student is progressing well on individualized (modified) expectations.

7. Research

Goal: Increased capacity of all staff to educate a wider range of learners.

- Create a provincial special education research framework that links the ministry, school boards, federations, community agencies, parent associations, universities and other post-secondary institutions. This framework would include action and participatory research and outreach activities to identify and share successful evidence-based practices and programs. The framework would support multiple research centres combined with a virtual, electronic portal for just-in-time access to information. Effective practices and programs would be used to inform provincial policy.

8. Special Education Funding Allocation

Goal: Improve the balance between the focus on learning and the need for appropriate processes, documentation, and accountability.

- Develop and phase in a simpler, streamlined funding process that provides protected special education funds that flow to boards in a predictable manner.
- Review the impact of the proposed modifications on the provincial French language education system.
- Beginning in 2006–07, allocate funds to boards based on enrolment (SEPPA), enrolment plus the board-specific incidence of students with high needs (including adjustments for Net New Needs), and direct funding for students with extremely high needs (SIP).
- Continue funding for special education equipment and for education programs in youth justice and care and treatment programs.
- Develop a research/review process to confirm the validity of or track changes to current rates of students with high needs to inform future funding decisions.
- Revise the process for funding students with extremely high needs to respond to their characteristics and contextual situations.
- Provide additional funds that would be targeted for innovation and research on effective practices for students with special education needs.