

## **Individual Education Plan (IEP) Provincial Trends Report 2012: Student Achievement and Narrowing Gaps**

### **Introduction**

Since 2003 the Ministry of Education's improvements have focused on three priorities:

- Increasing student achievement and reaching targets of
  - 75% of grade 6 students at the provincial standard (level 3) in reading, writing and mathematics
  - 85% secondary school graduation rate
- Narrowing gaps in student achievement, and
- Increasing public confidence in publicly funded education.

For students with special education needs the number of students reaching the provincial standard has continued to increase year over year from 2002-03, the number of exemptions have decreased, and, the number of students moving through the levels has also continued to increase year over year.

These achievements can be linked to work of the ministry and school boards to transform how students with special education needs receive programs and/or services. The vision for this transformation was set out in *Special Education Transformation: The report of the Co-Chairs with the Recommendations of the Working Table on Special Education* (2006). The Report identified the following four directions for changes that would be required to achieve transformation in special education:

- a focus on student learning and assessing progress;
- a focus on accountability for results;
- a proactive model; and,
- a focus on access to education.

With respect to these changes, the Ministry of Education recognized that the *Individual Education Plan* (IEP) is a critical tool in driving student achievement and well-being for students with special education needs. In 2006, the ministry began a collaborative review of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and corresponding Provincial Report Cards. The intent of the review was to address the series of relevant recommendations related to the IEP made by the Working Table and to move toward the special education goals of developing and implementing effective IEPs for students with special education needs, and enhancing the collaborative relationships between educators and parents. The results of the review in 2006 indicated that areas requiring further focus included annual program goals, learning expectations, parent consultation, and transition planning.

These areas of focus were reinforced in the 2008 Report on Special Education by the Auditor General of Ontario. The Auditor's recommendations focused on a number of areas including *Individual Education Plans* (IEPs) – reporting progress, collaboration with parents in the development of the IEP, monitoring student progress and transition planning.

The follow up from the 2006-07 IEP Review and the Auditor's recommendations also led to the ministry's development of an electronic IEP template and IEP samples to support school boards<sup>1</sup>, as well as a parent IEP website to encourage and support greater parental involvement. Furthermore school boards used their individual school board results to inform professional learning for staff and Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs). During the fall of 2009, the ministry held regional conversations with school boards and gathered further information on school board practices and the use of assessment data in the planning and development of IEPs.

The release of *Growing Success; Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools* (2010), further articulated the focus on accountability and results for students with special education needs. In addition, the *Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement (BIPSA)* and the *School Effectiveness Framework (SEF): A support for school improvement and student success K – 12 (2010)* articulate a cycle of school board program planning processes supporting student achievement including students with special education needs.

It is within this context of ongoing work to improve the achievement and well-being of students with special education needs that the ministry undertook a further Provincial IEP Review in spring 2012. The following is a description of the 2011-12 IEP Review and a summary of provincial trends.

## **Methodology**

In spring 2012 the ministry undertook a Provincial *Individual Education Plan* (IEP) Review. The purpose of this review was to measure progress since the 2006-07 *Provincial IEP Review*. The methodology used in this review included the establishment of internal school board review teams.

The teams were asked to review a minimum of 10 IEPs (5 elementary and 5 secondary) in relation to key elements of the *IEP Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation, 2000*. School boards rated their progress using the following rubric in their self-assessment of both their 2006 and 2012 results:

- Emergent:* The IEP complies with few of the *IEP Standards*. Some of the required information is missing or incorrectly noted. Few of the content is personalized and precise.
- Developing:* The IEP complies with some of *IEP Standards*. Some of the required information is noted. Some of the content is personalized

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<sup>1</sup> Boards refer to school boards, school authorities and provincial schools

and precise.

*Satisfactory:* The IEP complies with most of the required *IEP Standards*. Most the content is personalized and precise.

*Proficient:* The IEP complies with all of the *IEP Standards*. All the information is personalized and precise.

The IEP Standards key elements that were reviewed according to the rubric included:

Template	Assessment Data
Areas of Strength and Areas of Need	Accommodations
Current Level of Achievement	Annual Program Goals
Learning Expectations	Teaching Strategies
Assessment Methods	Transition Plan
Parent Consultation	Link to the Provincial Report Card
Summary (clear linkages to other components of the IEP).	

School board results were submitted electronically to the ministry where they were collated and analyzed. The following sections were included:

- Self-rating of 2006-07 IEP Collaborative Review results;
- Self-rating of 2011-12 of 10 sample IEPs (5 elementary, 5 secondary);
- Self-reporting of capacity building opportunities since 2006;
- Self-reporting of internal planning for moving forward;
- Suggestions for supports from the ministry; and
- Additional comments on the 2011-12 IEP review process.

### **Key Learnings**

The following section highlights the key learnings from the review.

A key purpose for the ministry releasing *IEP Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation, 2000* was to describe province-wide standards that school boards use when developing, implementing and monitoring IEPs. The top two levels in the scoring rubric are *Satisfactory and Proficient* and are considered to be acceptable results for school boards.

*Figure 1* illustrates that there has been an increase in the percentage of school boards who are reporting that they are at the satisfactory and/or proficient level in terms of compliance with the key elements of the standards. All school boards indicated a satisfactory and/or proficient level in meeting all of the standards. Areas requiring continued focus include annual program goals, transition planning and parent consultation.

*Figure 1: Change in School Boards at Satisfactory or Proficient Level by Key Element*

<b>Key Elements of the Scoring Rubric</b>	<b>2006-2007 % of Internal IEP Review Teams indicating satisfactory/proficient</b>	<b>2011-2012 % of Internal IEP Review Teams indicating satisfactory/proficient</b>	<b>Degree of Change Between 2006-07 and 2012</b>
Template	60	95	+35
Assessment Data	46	80	+34
Areas of Strength & Areas of Need	36	83	+47
Accommodations	27	83	+56
Current Level of Achievement	26	57	+31
Annual Program Goals	14	51	+37
Learning Expectations	11	66	+55
Teaching Strategies	28	71	+43
Assessment Methods	38	68	+30
Transition Plan	23	54	+31
Parent Consultation	18	54	+36
Link to the Provincial Report Card	29	78	+49
Summary-clear interdependence among the key elements of the standards above	20	79	+59

### **Capacity Building Opportunities between 2006 and 2012 for the Continuous Improvement of IEPs**

School boards shared information about the professional learning they undertook at the system and school levels to build capacity to improve the planning, implementation and monitoring of IEPs. They reported ongoing professional learning in four major areas: awareness development; professional development; resource development; and internal IEP reviews.

## **Awareness Development**

IEP review teams reported awareness development opportunities most frequently for students, parents, Early Childhood Educators (ECE), Educational Assistants (EAs), SEACs and community agencies.

*“Our internal annual IEP audits have assisted us with improving our IEPs.”*

*“The checklist is very helpful. We have used the checklist from 2006-2007 for conducting our own internal reviews for the past few years and for use in PD sessions with principals and teachers.”*

*“We have had very good feedback from stakeholders with respect to the provincial template.”*

## **Professional Development** (e.g., workshops, professional learning communities)

School boards reported the highest frequency of professional development for teachers, principals/vice principals and central professional services staff. Participants also reported that learning opportunities were offered to: other school boards; staff in Section 23 and Section 68 programs; New Teacher Induction Programs (NTIP); Federations; Additional Qualification Courses; and, IEP Steering Committees.

Methods used to deliver professional development included: presentations; IEP video training; IEP software manual development; job embedded coaching opportunities; special education carousel evenings; IEP/Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC) web based applications; the establishment of an IEP Help Desk; student focused groups; and, local special education courses.

*“The professional development being provided for Special Education Resource Teachers at both levels is resulting in improvement in the development of the IEPs. For example, focused work on IEPs for students on alternative programs through the A4 project has resulted in well-written, well developed IEPs.”*

## **Resource Development**

School boards indicated that they had developed resources for specific audiences. The resources targeted parents, teachers, principals/vice-principals and central administration staff. Many school boards indicated a willingness to share the resources they have developed or were in the process of developing for 2012-13. The ministry has established an IEP e-Community to assist in this process.

## Internal IEP Review

School boards reported that existing internal annual IEP reviews provide rich opportunities for professional learning and for including parents, students and community partners. They also indicated that they will continue with their existing internal IEP review processes and/or adapt to the model presented in the 2012 Review.

School boards acknowledged that the IEP review process modelled by the ministry helped to facilitate their own internal IEP review process. They identified that the review was an excellent opportunity to assess their own progress and to identify a targeted area for future professional development.

*“Our committee felt that the audit process was an extremely beneficial one and an excellent tool for professional development. Dedicating time to review, reflect and plan on next steps for improving our IEP’s was truly appreciated. Because of this process we are committed to beginning each school year with a baseline training session with an internal audit planned following the first IEP of each school year. We felt that our process can be much more streamlined with expertise being shared more effectively to maximize the quality of the IEPs. We are also committed to engaging our parents in a more dynamic way to empower them to be more involved....and to help them understand more effectively the purposefulness of an IEP as it relates to their child is our priority. Parents need to feel the IEP process is a tool for success not a barrier to success.”*

School boards reported a variety of membership in their internal IEP Review Teams as follows:

- 60% had a Principal;
- 30% had a Vice Principal;
- 70% had a Special Education Coordinator and/or Consultant;
- 50% had a Superintendent;
- 45% had a Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) Member;
- 65% had a Teacher; and
- 10% had a Student.

Other members included: parents; members of community agencies; educational assistants; and other professionals (e.g., Applied Behaviour Analysis Specialist, Speech and Language Pathologist, Psychologist).

**For an overview of the 2011-12 and 2006-07 reviews please see:**

Appendix 1 for the Summary of 2011-12 Board Results<sup>2</sup> with IEP Standards: and Appendix II for the Summary of 2006 – 07 Board Results<sup>3</sup> with IEP Standards.

<sup>2</sup> Note: Some percentages have been rounded up

<sup>3</sup> Note: Some percentages have been rounded up

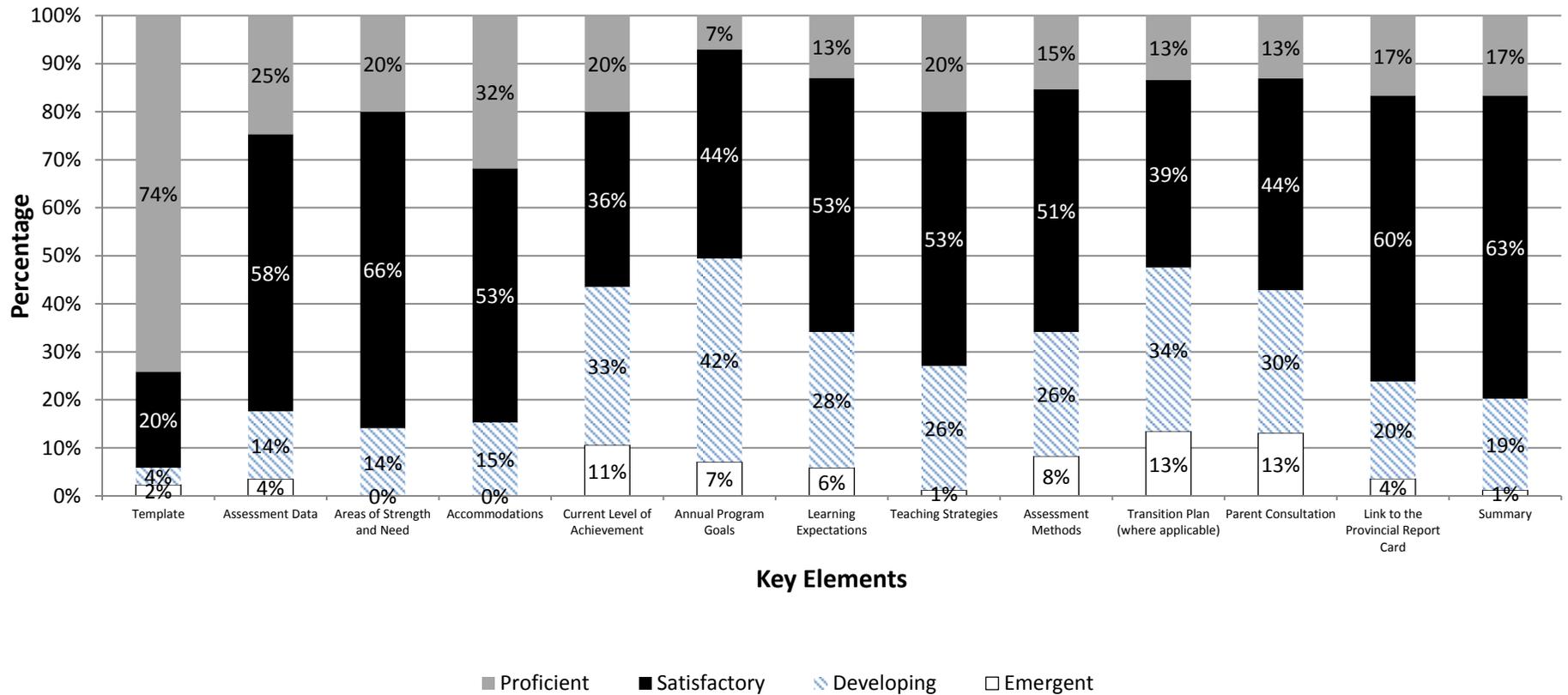
Note: Some percentages have been rounded up.

### **Moving Forward with IEPs**

School boards made the following suggestions for areas where they or the ministry could focus on the future to support the continuous improvement in the development, implementation and monitoring of IEPs:

- An internal IEP review process to facilitate capacity building and further enhance board accountability for achievement;
- A focus on parent consultation, measurable annual program goals, learning expectations, and transition planning;
- A focus on elements of the IEP that describe the student's program, the accommodations to be provided and how learning is to be demonstrated;
- A focus on IEP awareness development activities for students, parents, SEACs, community agencies, early childhood educators and teacher assistants;
- A focus on IEP professional development in the form of workshops and professional learning communities for teachers, early childhood educators, teacher assistants, principals/vice-principals and central administrative staff; and
- Updating current resources, creating new ones, and providing a platform for resources to be easily accessed.

## Appendix 1: Summary of 2011-12 Board Results with IEP Standards



## Appendix II: 2006-07 Summary of Board Results with IEP Standards

