



**redefining
excellence**
DSBN 2023-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

Learning and Growing Together

A PARENT/GUARDIAN'S GUIDE TO
SPECIAL EDUCATION
2026-27



A Message from the CEO

Dear Parents/Guardians,

At the District School Board of Niagara, our primary focus is student achievement and the mental health and well-being of our students. We serve over 42,000 students and are committed to offering support, resources and programs necessary for all of our students to reach their full potential and achieve their goals.

We know that each child learns differently. The DSNB provides a wide range of supports and accommodations that are designed to meet the unique learning needs of each student. Educators in our school are equipped to provide differentiation for students in programming, instructional strategies as well as assessment. As required, students are supported through the implementation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and given access to a school team that works collaboratively with students, parents, as well as system staff to create a learning environment that promotes inclusion and full participation for all students.

Parents and Guardians are important partners in creating a rich educational experience for students. Regular and ongoing communication between the school and home helps create the conditions for successful experiences and outcomes. Our schools welcome the opportunity to work with families and community agencies to ensure students benefit from our collective focus on their achievement and well-being.

We value our community partners and the commitment of the DSNB Special Education Advisory Committee to inform and support the very important role we play in serving our students. Through this collaborative partnership of families, DSNB staff and community resources, we can be confident that we are truly valuing the uniqueness of each individual student and redefining excellence in the DSNB.

Sincerely,



Kelly Pisek
CEO



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Overview of Special Education

The Framework and Guiding Principles of Special Education within the District School Board of Niagara

The provisions of special education programs and services within the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) are mandated by the Education Act; the regulations contained within Regulation 181/98 is the provincial legislation which determines special education operating procedures within Ontario. The practices and procedures of the District School Board of Niagara strive to encompass both diverse and individualized supports, while reflecting the intent of this legislation.

In the DSBN, Special Education is a collaborative process that encompasses the supports, services, and strategies that provide the opportunities for each student to reach their potential. Each student is a unique individual with their own strengths and needs and some students may require special education supports and services to achieve success. The DSBN has a full continuum of services available to help support the unique needs of each child.

Parents and families are an integral part of a successful education. You are invited and encouraged to be involved through ongoing communication with the school. Your knowledge and input is of utmost importance when planning supports for your child within the education setting. The goal for each child is to ensure that they are served in the most enabling environment that lends itself to their individualized success. The DSBN strives to build a school community that values the learning differences and contributions of each and every student.

The Parent/Guardian's Guide to Special Education

The District School Board of Niagara values parents/guardians as a key stakeholder in their child's education. We have worked to create a guide that is inviting, provides information about our special education services and supports a framework for a positive, collaborative environment.

The Ministry of Education requires that all school boards have available a guide for parents/guardians to inform them of Special Education services in their board.

This Parent/Guardian's Guide is available in Braille, large print and audio format. Please contact the Board to request one of these alternate formats if required.



Key Roles In Supporting Success

Student The student is at the centre of the support process. Their strengths, needs, voice, and experiences help guide planning, problem-solving, and decisions about supports at school. Honouring student voice helps create learning spaces where students feel seen, valued, and supported.

Parents/Guardians Parents/guardians are valued partners in supporting student learning, well-being, and success. They bring important knowledge about their child's strengths, needs, interests, experiences, and goals, helping school teams develop a deeper understanding of the learner. Through ongoing communication, collaboration, and shared problem-solving, parents/guardians contribute to planning, monitoring progress, and making informed decisions about supports and services. Strong family-school partnerships help create inclusive, responsive learning environments where students can thrive.

Classroom Staff Classroom staff include the classroom teacher (or Specialized Program teacher) and, where appropriate, staff who support student learning and well-being in the classroom, such as the Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE) and Educational Assistant (EA). The classroom teacher is responsible for planning and programming for student learning, while other staff support implementation, engagement, and day-to-day learning in collaboration with the teacher.

LRT (Elementary) / SERT / Student Success / Guidance (Secondary) These staff members provide additional support to help plan, coordinate, and monitor strategies for students who may need extra assistance. They work with classroom staff, school administrators, students, and families to help identify supports and next steps that promote learning, belonging, and thriving.

Principal / Vice-Principal The principal and vice-principal provide leadership at the school, support problem-solving, and help coordinate communication, planning, and next steps when concerns arise. They also help foster caring, inclusive, and responsive school spaces.

System Special Education Multidisciplinary Team This system-level team provides specialized support to schools when additional planning or problem-solving is needed. The team may include Consultants, Central Educational Assistants, Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, ABA Facilitators, Psychologists, Youth Counsellors, Social Workers, the SEA Equipment Team, as well as itinerant teachers and support staff for Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard of Hearing students. Together, they help schools respond to student strengths and needs in thoughtful and collaborative ways.

Superintendent The superintendent provides system-level leadership and oversight to support schools and special education services, helping ensure that students, families, and staff are supported across learning environments.



Collaboration & Planning

The District School Board of Niagara is committed to offering a wide range of both special education services and programs to students board-wide. We provide supports and programs that are responsive to the strengths and needs of each student ensuring a successful learning environment for all. Working together and collaborating as a team to support every child is essential to achieving success.

Families are important partners in helping children learn, belong, and do well at school. What you know about your child helps the school understand their strengths, needs, and experiences. By working together, families and schools can plan supports that help students succeed.

Regular communication between home and school helps everyone understand your child's progress and goals. Families are encouraged to speak with the classroom teacher, or Specialized Program teacher, first. If more support is needed, the principal or vice-principal can help plan next steps.

The classroom team may include the classroom teacher, or Specialized Program teacher, and, when needed, the Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE) and Educational Assistant (EA). In elementary schools, Learning Resource Teachers (LRTs) may also help. In secondary schools, Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs), Student Success staff, and Guidance staff may support planning and problem-solving. The team uses observations, conversations, and student work to decide when extra support may be needed.

Each DSNB school has an In-School Team, led by the principal. This team meets to talk about students who may need extra support and to plan next steps. Families may be invited to share information and help plan supports. In secondary schools, this team is called the In-School Student Success Team.

If more support is needed, the In-School Team can ask for help from a system-level Multidisciplinary Team. This team may include consultants, Central Educational Assistants, Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, ABA Facilitators, Psychologists, Youth Counsellors, Social Workers, the SEA Equipment Team, and itinerant teachers, such as Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard of Hearing teachers.

DSBN Staff that may be part of the In-School or Multidisciplinary Team:

CLASSROOM STAFF	SCHOOL STAFF	SYSTEM STAFF
• Classroom Teacher • Educational Assistant (EA) • Special Education Teacher • Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE)	• Principal • Vice-Principal • Learning Resource Teacher (LRT) (elementary) • Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) (secondary) • Student Success Teacher (secondary) • Guidance Teacher (secondary)	• Special Education Supervisor • Special Education Senior Manager • Student Achievement Leader, Special Education • Consultant, Special Education • Resource Teacher • Central Educational Assistant • Occupational Therapist • Speech Language Pathologist • Psychologist or Psychological Associate • Youth Counsellor • Social Worker • ABA facilitator



Tips for Parents/Guardians

Planning Tips For Parents/Guardians

DSBN sees caregivers as important partners in planning for their child's education. We are here to support you, work with you, and help you through the process when questions or concerns come up. Good communication between home and school helps students learn, feel included, and do well. Here are some things to think about when you have questions about your child's education or when you are preparing for a school meeting:

- Your child's teacher is the best person to contact about your child's progress. You can connect by phone, email, or by setting up a time to meet. You can also ask to meet when you have questions or information to share.
- Keep a file at home with school information about your child. This may include report cards, Individual Education Plans, assessments, IPRC forms, and important medical information. These documents can be helpful when you meet with the school.
- Before a meeting, write down your questions and the information you want to share. This can help make sure all important topics are discussed.
- You may bring someone with you to a meeting, such as a friend, support person, parent advocate, or community partner. Please let the school know ahead of time so there is enough space. You may also take notes or ask if someone from the school team can take notes to help everyone remember the discussion and next steps.
- Ask questions if something is not clear. We want to work with you, answer your questions, and make sure you understand the next steps. If you think of questions after a meeting, please follow up with someone from the school team.
- The school team or caregiver may ask staff from the System Special Education Multidisciplinary Team to attend meetings. This team can offer extra support and ideas for your child's education.
- Open and ongoing communication helps us build trust, work together, and understand each other. We know that caregivers know their child best. Student voice is also important because it helps us understand each child's strengths, needs, and goals. When we work together, we can create welcoming and inclusive spaces where children feel understood, supported, and ready to learn, belong, and thrive. We are here to support you as we work together to help your child reach their full potential.



Special Education Terms

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ABA	Applied Behaviour Analysis
AODA	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASL	American Sign Language
AT	Assistive Technology
BCBA	Board Certified Behaviour Analyst
BMS	Behaviour Management Systems
BLV	Blind Low Vision
CCAT	Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test
CVI	Cortical Vision Impairment
DB	Deaf-Blind
DD	Developmental Disability
DECE	Designated Early Childhood Educator
DHH	Deaf and Hard of Hearing
DSBN	District School Board of Niagara
EA	Educational Assistant
ECPP	Education and Community Partnership Program
FBA	Functional Behaviour Assessment
FVA	Functional Vision Assessment
HCCSS	Home and Community Care Support Services
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IPRC	Identification, Placement and Review Committee
LD	Learning Disability
LI	Language Impairment
LRT	Learning Resource Teacher (Elementary)
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
ME	Multiple Exceptionalities
MID	Mild Intellectual Disability
MLL	Multi-Language Learner
NCC	Niagara Children's Centre
NSTS	Niagara Student Transportation Services
O&M	Orientation and Mobility
OAP	Ontario Autism Program
OHAH	Ontario Health at Home
OSR	Ontario Student Record

Special Education Terms

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
OT	Occupational Therapist
PBSP	Positive Behaviour Support Plan
PL	Program Leader (Secondary)
PT	Physiotherapist
SEA	Special Equipment Amount
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Committee
SEPPA	Special Education Per Pupil Amount
SERT	Special Education Resource Teacher (Secondary)
SIP	Special Incidence Portion
SLP	Speech-Language Pathologist
SSTC	Specialized School to Community
SSTW	Specialized School to Work
SW/AC/YC	Social Worker/Attendance Counsellor/Youth Counsellor
TAY	Transition Aged Youth



Special Education Services and Programming

The District School Board of Niagara is committed to ensuring that every student has access to the supports, services, and learning environments needed to reach their full potential. Through a continuum of special education services and programs, DSBN works collaboratively with students, families, educators, and community partners to identify strengths, address individual needs, and remove barriers to learning. Whether through specialized support staff, assistive technology, assessments, consultation services, or specialized program placements, DSBN strives to provide responsive, inclusive, and student-centered supports that promote achievement, well-being, and belonging for all learners.

Special Education Services

Special Education Services refers to the facilities, resources and equipment necessary for developing and implementing a student's special education program. The District School Board of Niagara is committed to providing a full range of services to meet the needs of all students. These services can include, but are not limited to, LRT/SERT support, technology and accessibility equipment, Speech Language Pathology or Psychological Assessment, and/or consultation, Youth Counsellor and/or Social Work support.

Special Education Programs

All special education programs are based on the results of continuous assessment and evaluation, and must be outlined on an **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**. The DSBN believes that all students have the right to learn in a program setting that best supports and meets their needs. There are a variety of programs available within the District School Board of Niagara to help support students with smaller classroom sizes and smaller teacher to student ratio.

These teachers are qualified special education teachers.



The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan for a student who needs special education support. An IEP describes a student's strengths and needs. It also lists the supports, changes to learning expectations, or alternative learning goals that are part of the student's program. The IEP is a working document. This means it can be changed and updated as needed. Parent and guardian input is important and welcomed when the IEP is created and reviewed. The school will work with you to create a program that supports your child. The school will also keep you informed about changes. A copy of the IEP will be kept in your child's Ontario Student Record.

When a student is having difficulty with learning, the In-School Team may talk with you about starting an IEP. IEPs can be created to support programming that is accommodated, modified and/or alternative. The student's program is assessed, monitored, and reviewed on an ongoing basis. Progress is reported through the Ontario Provincial Report Card (accommodated, modified programming) or an Alternative Report Card (alternative programming).

During the IEP development process the school team will consider a variety of programming options for students. Some of the options are listed below. An IEP can include accommodations, modified learning expectations, and/or alternative learning goals. Each subject, course or program will be categorized into one of the following areas for students on an IEP:

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation provides students with special teaching strategies, assessment strategies, human supports and/or individualized equipment to enable a student to learn and demonstrate learning. Accommodation does not alter the Ontario Curriculum expectations.

MODIFICATION

Modification is changes made in the Ontario Curriculum expectations for a subject or course in order to meet a student's learning needs. Expectations may be at a different grade level and/or an increase or decrease in the number and/or complexity of the Ontario Curriculum.

ALTERNATIVE

Alternative expectations are developed to help students acquire knowledge and skills that are not represented in the Ontario Curriculum. Some examples include: social skills, orientation/mobility training and personal care programs.

Students may be placed on an IEP to support growth and success. Some students are formally identified by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). Both formal and informal assessment assist in the IPRC decision process and can be provided by the parent/guardian and/or the school or both. For students who have been formally identified through the IPRC process, an IEP is a mandatory and valuable programming plan to set goals, strategies and plan assessment that serve the individual needs of your child specifically.



Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process

What is an IPRC?

An Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) meets to decide if a student is exceptional and what placement and program will best support the student. The committee is made up of educators who meet with you to talk about your child's special education needs. If your child is 16 years of age or older, they are invited to take part in the meeting. The team works with you to decide how to best support your child. This meeting happens once a year to review the decision. It can also happen more often if changes are needed.

The committee has three required members. A principal leads the meeting, and two other staff members take part. As the parent/guardian, and when appropriate the student, you play an important role. You help the committee make good decisions about your child and the support options available in the District School Board of Niagara.

You are encouraged to ask questions at the meeting. You can also share any information you think is important for the IPRC to consider. Along with the principal, the committee may include the following educators:

- Classroom Teacher or Learning Resource Teacher/Special Education Resource Teacher for the school
- Special Education Teacher, Consultant or Resource Teacher
- Vice-Principal of the school
- Other School/Board staff that have a good understanding of your child

What role do Parents/Guardians play in the IPRC Meeting?

- Parents/guardians know their child best. You are encouraged to share information, work with the school, and take part in planning for your child's education. Students who are 16 years of age or older can also take part as important partners in planning their school program.
- The committee will ask for your input and talk with you about the options available in the District School Board of Niagara. You are encouraged to ask questions and ask for more information if needed. We want to make sure you

understand the options and agree with the IPRC decision before moving forward.

- The Education Act requires us to tell you that you can appeal an IPRC decision if your concerns have not been resolved with the school. After the decision is made, you have 15 days to ask for another IPRC meeting to talk about your concerns. If you still do not agree after the second meeting, you may file a notice of appeal within 15 days. You may also appeal within 30 days of the first IPRC meeting by writing to the Secretary of the District School Board of Niagara, 191 Carlton St., St. Catharines, ON, L2R 7P4.

The IPRC Committee will:

- Decide if your child should be identified as exceptional, based on the Ministry of Education's definitions of exceptionalities.
- Decide on the best placement for your child, based on their strengths and needs. The committee will talk about your child's strengths and needs when making IPRC decisions.
- Make the first decisions about exceptionality, placement, and program. The committee reviews these decisions every year. A review can also happen after three months if the parent/guardian or school believes it is in the child's best interest.
- Move forward with the decision when the parent/guardian, or the student if they are 16 years of age or older, is comfortable with the recommendations.

Appeal Process

DSBN works with parents/guardians to support the needs of all students. During the IPRC process, your input is important. It helps the committee make decisions about your child's identification and placement. If you feel unsure, have changed your mind, or would like to talk more with the committee, please speak with your child's principal. We believe the best decisions are made when we work together.

You have the right to appeal an IPRC decision if you disagree with it. If you have talked with the principal and the Student Achievement Leader for Special Education and

Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process

your concern has not been resolved, you may follow the appeal process below:

- Within 15 days of receiving the decision, you may ask the IPRC to hold a second meeting to talk about your concerns; or
- Within 30 days of receiving the decision, you may send a notice of appeal to the Secretary of the District School Board of Niagara, 191 Carlton St., St. Catharines, ON, L2R 7P4.
- If you still do not agree after the second meeting, you may file a notice of appeal within 15 days of receiving the second decision.

The notice of appeal must:

- **indicate the decision with which you disagree; and**
- **include a statement that sets out your reasons for disagreeing.**

What happens when the appeal process is implemented?

The appeal process includes these steps:

- DSBN will set up a special education appeal board to hear your appeal. The board will have three people who do not already know about the issue being appealed. One of these people will be chosen by you, the parent/guardian.
- The chair of the appeal board will set up a meeting at a time and place that works for everyone. The meeting must happen within 30 days after the appeal board members are chosen, unless the parents/guardians and the board agree in writing to a later date.
- The appeal board will review the information that was given to the IPRC. The board may also speak with people who can share helpful information about the appeal.

Parents/guardians, and students who are 16 years of age or older, may attend the meeting and take part in the discussion. After the meeting, the appeal board must make a recommendation within three days. The appeal board may agree or disagree with the IPRC decision. If the board

agrees, it will recommend that the decision be followed.

If the appeal board disagrees, it will make a recommendation about your child's identification, placement, or both. The appeal board will send you its recommendation in writing and explain the reasons for the recommendation.

If DSBN does not follow the appeal board's recommendation, you may appeal to the Special Education Tribunal. To do this, follow the steps below:

- Write to the secretary of the Special Education Tribunal to ask for a hearing.
- The appeal board's written decision will include the information you need to apply to the Special Education Tribunal.

This process protects the rights of parents/guardians and students during IPRC decisions. Before starting an appeal, we encourage you to speak with the school principal. If more help is needed, you may also contact the Superintendent of Special Education Support Services.

IPRC Process

Identification Placement and Review Committee Process

IPRC Requested by Principal

- The Principal may request an IPRC meeting if they believe that one is necessary to aid them in supporting your child.

IPRC Requested by Parent/Guardian

- You as a parent/guardian, may request an IPRC meeting be held to discuss the placement and exceptionality for your child.
- When the request is made in writing, the Principal will set an IPRC meeting and respond within 15 days.

Invitation Letter Sent to Parent/Guardian

- An IPRC invitation will be sent to you to attend and collaborate regarding the strengths and needs of your child. A form on which you should confirm your attendance will accompany this invitation.
- You will receive "A Parent/Guardian's Guide" from the DSNB for you to read and familiarize yourself with the process and ask questions before and during the meeting.

IPRC Meeting

- The Principal will chair the meeting. Two other staff members will be present as committee members and may include classroom teacher, Learning Resource Teacher, Vice-Principal and/or DSNB staff from School Support Services - Special Education Department.
- You play a very important role in this meeting and we encourage you to attend, ask questions and collaborate regarding your child's Education Plan.
- The committee will make a decision with your input, and move forward once you are comfortable with the IPRC decision.
- You will be asked to sign if you are in agreement with the decision, and will be given a copy of the IPRC paperwork for your records.

IPRC Meeting

- The decision will be made in consultation with you and will be implemented when the IPRC Statement of Decision is signed and you are in agreement.
- Exceptionalities are outlined in this pamphlet and are provided by the Ministry of Education.
- Placement options that are available in the DSNB include, Indirect Service, Resource Assistance, Withdrawal Assistance, and Special Class Placements. These are discussed in detail on page 19.
- IPRC Decisions will be reviewed annually unless you, or the Principal of the School feel it is in the best interest of the child to convene another meeting after three months.



IPRC - Exceptionalities

Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities

CATEGORY	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DEFINITION
BEHAVIOURAL	
Behavioural	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: 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.
COMMUNICATIONAL	
Autism	A severe learning disorder that is characterized by: a) disturbances in: – rate of educational development; – ability to relate to the environment; – mobility; – perception, speech, and language; b) lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.
Language Impairment	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: a) involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication; and b) include one or more of: – language delay; – dysfluency; – voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.



IPRC - Exceptionalities

Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities

CATEGORY	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DEFINITION
Speech Impairment	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.
Learning Disability	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: - 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 at least 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; 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 not 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.
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.



IPRC - Exceptionalities

Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities

CATEGORY	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DEFINITION
Mild Intellectual Disability	A learning disorder characterized by: a) an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and supportive service; 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: 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 pupils 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.



IPRC - Placements

Special Education Placement Options within the DSBN

The District School Board of Niagara believes the regular classroom should be considered first when talking about placement options for students. We also believe families should have choices to help meet their child's learning needs. DSBN offers different placement options, which are explained below.

All placement options support your child's strengths and needs through an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Regular Education Classroom with Indirect Support:

- The classroom teacher and special education teacher work together to plan the best supports for your child.
- The classroom teacher teaches your child's program and curriculum.

Regular Education Classroom with Resource Assistance:

- The classroom teacher teaches your child in the regular classroom. A special education teacher may help with the curriculum when needed.
- Your child may receive special instruction from a special education teacher. This support may happen one-to-one or in a small group in the regular classroom.

Regular Education Classroom with Withdrawal Assistance:

- The classroom teacher teaches most of your child's program. A special education teacher may help when needed.
- The special education teacher may work with your child in the classroom, one-to-one, or in a small group to support their learning.
- Your child receives some instruction outside the regular classroom for less than half of the school day.

Special Education Class with Partial Integration:

- The special education teacher teaches most of your child's program.
- The classroom teacher teaches parts of your child's program in a regular classroom when appropriate. This helps support your child's learning and growth.
- The Education Act requires special education classes to be smaller than regular classes. Smaller classes allow for more focused support.
- For at least half of the school day, the student-teacher ratio follows Regulation 298 of the Education Act.

Special Education Class - Full-Time:

- The special education teacher teaches all of your child's program and helps support their learning and growth.
- The Education Act requires special education classes to be smaller than regular classes. Smaller classes allow for more focused support.
- For the full school day, the student-teacher ratio follows Regulation 298 of the Education Act.



IPRC - Programs

Special education programs offered at the DSBN

The District School Board of Niagara offers several program options to support students and families. The regular classroom is always considered first. Some students may need a different program to meet their learning needs. The programs below include support from a special education teacher. Many also include support from educational assistants. DSBN offers a range of options so students can learn in the setting that best supports their needs.

STRUCTURED STRATEGIES PROGRAM

This program gives short-term, focused support to students who need help building skills so they can continue learning in their home school. It supports students who need help with social skills, emotional regulation, and self-regulation. Students learn in a highly structured setting. A qualified special education teacher teaches both Ontario Curriculum and alternative programming. An educational assistant supports the class. Supports may include planned breaks, movement or sensory breaks, social skills lessons, and assistive technology.

COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

This program supports students with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or multiple exceptionalities that have significant needs in the areas of expressive and receptive communication skills. Students may use augmentative communication to build independence, communication, and self-regulation. ABA strategies, transition planning, self-regulation, and social skills programming are also part of the program. A qualified special education teacher teaches the class, with support from educational assistants.

FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS PROGRAM

This elementary program supports students with significant intellectual disabilities and alternative programming needs. Students may work on greatly modified curriculum expectations. They also learn functional skills to support daily living and independence. Students receive individualized academic support and, when needed, support for physical needs. A qualified special education teacher teaches the program, with support from one or more educational assistants.

SPECIALIZED SCHOOL TO COMMUNITY PROGRAM

This secondary program supports students with significant intellectual disabilities and alternative programming needs. Students may work on modified Ontario Curriculum expectations. Programming may also include functional and job-related skills. Students build independent living skills, receive individualized academic support, and get support for physical needs when needed. Transition planning is an important part of the program. Students build connections to community supports as they move toward graduation.

ELEMENTARY PART-TIME ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

This program supports students with very strong intellectual abilities. These students need learning that is deeper, broader, and more challenging. The Elementary Part-Time Enrichment Program gives students activities that build higher-level thinking skills. Enrichment programming is offered for students in Grades 5 to 8 at different locations across DSBN.



IPRC - Programs

Transition Planning

All students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will have a transition plan to support them. Transitions can include moving within the school, changing grades or schools, moving from school to work, continuing education, or connecting with community opportunities. Students are more likely to have a successful transition when schools work with parents/guardians, employers, community agencies, and post-secondary partners. Transition plans can include many different supports for students.

Below are some examples of transition processes used in the District School Board of Niagara:

Preschool Transition Process: DSBN staff work with local preschool resource consultants and community agencies to help preschool children with learning needs start school successfully. This process includes creating transition plans, sharing information, and supporting families who are new to DSBN.

Grade 8 to 9 Transition: A transition form is completed for every student entering Grade 9. This information is shared with the new school so staff can understand each student's strengths and needs before secondary school begins. For students with an IEP, this may include a meeting with elementary and secondary school staff to create a transition plan.

Transition for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing: The Resource Teacher – Deaf and Hard of Hearing works with the Infant Hearing Program, community agencies such as Niagara Children's Centre, VOICE Auditory Verbal Therapists, and the Provincial School for the Deaf. Together, they help support a smooth transition to school with DSBN.

Transition Aged Youth (TAY) Planning

Transition Aged Youth planning helps students with developmental disabilities prepare for adulthood. It brings together the student, family, school staff, and community partners to create one plan that supports the student's goals, daily living skills, community participation, work opportunities, and future adult services. TAY planning usually begins in Grade 9, or around age 14, and is reviewed each year until age 18. The school or a community agency may lead the process, but school staff help schedule, guide, or support the meeting. Students are encouraged to take part in a way that works for them, such as attending the meeting or sharing ideas in another accessible way. With consent, the completed plan is shared with the student, family, school, community partners, Contact Niagara, and the DSBN Special Education Consultant to support future adult service planning.

These are some of the main transition processes used by DSBN. Transition planning also happens day to day for many students. We know every child has different needs, so transition plans are created to support each student as an individual.



SEAC and Community Partners

Community partners and organizations

Many community organizations can help parents/guardians and students with information and support during the special education process.

All school boards must have a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). SEAC meets each month and gives advice to the District School Board of Niagara about special education programs and services. This committee is made up of trustees and representatives from local associations and community organizations. In addition, school board Staff who represent various employee groups and/or provide information to the committee also participate. The purpose of SEAC is to review issues related to the education of students with special education needs and make recommendations to the board. The members bring their associations' perspectives to the discussions while working together to ensure opportunities for the best education for all students.

2026-27 SEAC Meeting Dates at the DSBN Education Centre, 191 Carlton Street, St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 7P4

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Wednesday, September 23, 2026 | • Wednesday, February 24, 2027 |
| • Wednesday, October 28, 2026 | • Wednesday, March 24, 2027 |
| • Wednesday, November 25, 2026 | • Wednesday, April 28, 2027 |
| • Wednesday, December 16, 2026 | • Wednesday, May 26, 2027 |
| • Wednesday, January 27, 2027 | • Wednesday, June 23, 2027 |

The community partners listed below are members of the District School Board of Niagara Special Education Advisory Committee:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Autism Ontario-Niagara Chapter | • Learning Disabilities Association Niagara |
| • Bethesda Services | • Niagara FASD Coalition |
| • Community Living | • Niagara Children's Centre |
| • Contact Niagara | • Niagara Support Services |
| • Down Syndrome Niagara | • Pathstone Mental Health |
| • Inclusion Action in Ontario | • Voice Niagara - For Children Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing |

Working with community agencies helps support students and families. If you plan to bring someone from a community agency to a school meeting, please let the school principal know ahead of time.



Provincial Schools

Ministry Provincial and Demonstration Schools

What are the Ministry's Provincial and Demonstration Schools?

The Ministry operates Provincial and Demonstration Schools throughout Ontario for students who are deaf, blind, deaf-blind, and severely learning-disabled including students with learning disabilities associated with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These programs are offered at the schools Monday to Friday, for students who live too far from school to travel daily.

Demonstration schools for English-speaking students with severe learning disabilities, including learning disabilities associated with ADHD.

AMETHYST SCHOOL

1090 Highbury Avenue
London, ON • N5Y 4V9

Telephone: (519) 453-4408

SAGONASKA SCHOOL

350 Dundas Street West
Belleville, ON • K8P 1B2

Telephone: (613) 967-2830

TRILLIUM SCHOOL

347 Ontario Street South
Milton, ON • L9T 3X9

Telephone: (905) 878-2851

Schools For The Deaf

ERNEST C. DRURY SCHOOL

255 Ontario Street South
Milton, ON • L9T 2M5

Telephone: (905) 878-2851
TTY: (905) 878-7195

ROBARTS SCHOOL

1090 Highbury Avenue • Box 7300
London, ON • N5Y 4V9

Telephone and TTY:
(519) 453-4400

SIR JAMES WHITNEY SCHOOL

350 Dundas Street West
Belleville, ON • K8P 1B2

Telephone and TTY:
(613) 967-2823

School For The Blind And Deaf-Blind

W. ROSS MACDONALD SCHOOL

350 Brant Avenue
Brantford, ON • N3T 3J9

Telephone: (519) 759-0730

Where can parents obtain additional information?

- School Principal
- Student Achievement Leader - Special Education

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES - DSBN

130 Louth Street, St. Catharines, L2S 2T4

Telephone: 905-227-5551



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DSBN 2023-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

Learning and Growing Together