

SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

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1.0 DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 Students with special needs are those whose needs are such that they require supports in addition to those provided by a classroom teacher.

2.0 EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

- 2.1 In addition to general formula funding, the Department of Education provides a grant to each school board to assist with the costs of programming and services for students with special needs (provincial Special Education Policy 1.3).

- 2.1.1 The provincial Special Education Policy outlines students for whom special education funding may be used as those students having any of the following exceptionalities:

- cognitive impairments
- emotional impairments
- learning disabilities
- physical disabilities and/or other health impairments
- speech impairments and/or communication disorders
- sensory impairments – vision, hearing
- multiple disabilities
- giftedness

3.0 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 The Halifax Regional School Board is committed to providing an appropriate education for all students by responding to their unique needs on an individual basis through the provision of a range of organizational and instructional options to enhance opportunities and the provision of continuity in programming for all students.
- 3.2 The Halifax Regional School Board is committed to quality education for all students through the provision of qualified teachers who are responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the program match, as much as possible, student strengths and needs.
- 3.3 The Halifax Regional School Board endorses the value of inclusive schooling. In accordance with the Education Act 64(2)(d), the Halifax Regional School Board is committed to “developing and implementing educational programs for students with special needs within the regular instructional settings with their peers in age in accordance with the regulations and the Minister’s policies and guidelines”.

4.0 SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

- 4.1 Services will be delivered through a clearly articulated, equitable model reflected in the planning framework and responsive to the needs identified through regional, area, family, school and individual program planning.

5.0 PROGRAM PLANNING

- 5.1 The Halifax Regional School Board endorses a process of identification, assessment, program planning and evaluation as outlined in the provincial Special Education Policy.
- 5.2 Each principal is responsible for ensuring that there is a collaborative structure in place (School Planning Team or SPT) for decision-making regarding the use of allocated school-based resources and services and to facilitate the development and implementation of individual program plans.
- 5.3 The Halifax Regional School Board will provide qualified personnel to assist schools in the identification of students with special needs through assessment and evaluation.

5.3.1 When formal assessment is deemed necessary by a School Planning Team, informed written consent from a parent/guardian is required prior to the assessment.

5.4 In accordance with the Department of Education Special Education policy 2.6, “an individual program plan (IPP), based on the student’s strengths and needs will be developed and implemented at the school level for every student for whom the provincial curriculum outcomes are not applicable and/or attainable”.

5.4.1 Transition planning is part of the individual planning process for each student with special needs.

6.0 COLLABORATION

6.1 The Halifax Regional School Board will ensure that the individual program planning process is collaborative in meeting student needs. In addition to appropriate staff, parents/guardians will be included at all stages of the planning process.

6.2 The Halifax Regional School Board is committed to working collaboratively with external agencies in program planning for students with special needs.

7.0 STUDENT PLACEMENT

7.1 Programming options shall be carefully considered for each individual student. In situations where a student with special needs requires a setting or services not available at their home school, the School Planning Team may initiate a referral for an alternative placement.

7.2 All placements in classes outside a student’s home school are considered temporary.

7.3 Placements will be reviewed annually or more often as needed.

8.0 TRANSPORTATION

8.1 Any student having a physical or cognitive disability requiring special transportation shall be conveyed from home to school at the Board’s cost, irrespective of distance.

9.0 COMMUNICATION

- 9.1 The Halifax Regional School Board will provide schools, parents/guardians, and the public with clear information about the range of services and costs associated with the provision of support for students with special needs.

10.0 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 10.1 The Halifax Regional School Board will support professional development opportunities for staff focused on meeting the needs of all students.

11.0 APPEALS

- 11.1 In cases where a parent/guardian of a child with special needs does not agree with the outcomes and/or placement indicated on the individual program plan, they may request an appeal as outlined in the School Board and Ministerial Appeal Guide, February 1999.

12.0 AUTHORIZATION

- 12.1 The Superintendent is authorized to develop and issue procedures in support of this policy.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

PROCEDURES

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1.0 SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

- 1.1 In order to ensure that student services are provided in an equitable manner, the Board will establish regional and school-based leadership and planning structures.
- 1.2 Through these structures, designated staff at each level will make informed decisions regarding the use of resources allocated to that level.
- 1.3 Each year as part of budget planning the Program and Student Services Department will make recommendations regarding System Standards for resources funded through the Board global budget. Depending upon the needs identified within schools and families, these services may change from year to year.
- 1.4 Enhanced services will be provided, pursuant to the Supplementary Funding Policy, at the area, family and school levels. Decisions regarding the allocation of these resources will be made through the School Planning Team.

2.0 PROGRAM PLANNING

- 2.1 In each school, the principal shall be responsible for establishing a School Planning Team (SPT). Functions of the SPT:
 - to determine how resources allocated to the school are to be used.
 - to provide support & co-ordination of services throughout the school
 - to develop PD for school- based program support and regular staff
 - to set up IPP teams as necessary

3.0 STUDENT PLACEMENT

- 3.1 When a School Planning Team determines that a student should be considered for placement in a special program outside their home school, the procedures for Special Class Placement, Creating Schools Populations Policy, will apply.

4.0 GUIDELINES REGARDING THE PROVISION OF SERVICES AND BENEFITS FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

- 4.1 The School Board may enter into agreements for the provision of external services and benefits for students. When the agreement is for a tuition agreement the private school must teach the provincial curriculum and the program offered must be acceptable to the School Board. Prior to consideration of such a request the following criteria must be met:
- 4.1.1 The process of identification, assessment, program planning and evaluation for students with special needs as outlined in Policy 2.2 of the Provincial Special Education Policy Manual and the Board's policy have been followed.
 - 4.1.2 The Board has explored all opportunities to realign, reallocate or change the delivery of services within the School Board to meet the needs of the student.
- 4.2 The parent/guardian submits to the office of the area Assistant Superintendent, in writing, a request for consideration of a tuition agreement for their son/daughter.
- 4.3 The request is reviewed by the Coordinator of Student Services within thirty (30) working days of the request.
- 4.4 The parent/guardian will be notified of the decision of the Special Education Review Committee by the Coordinator of Student Services, in writing.
- 4.5 Only services provided through the Halifax Regional School Board shall be provided on school property during the regular school day.

5.0 COMMUNICATION

- 5.1 An information website related to student services will be developed by Regional Student Services staff and maintained with the support of the Communications Department of the Board.

- 5.2 Each school shall prepare and distribute a brochure describing the student services available at their site using a template developed by the Coordinator of Student Services in consultation with the Communication Department of the Board.

6.0 SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL EDUCATION APPEALS

- 6.1 In a case where a member of the program planning team does not agree with the outcomes and/or placement indicated in the individual program plan, a School Board Special Education Appeal may be initiated.
- 6.2 A letter to the office of the appropriate Superintendent of the Halifax Regional School Board is written to request a School Board Special Education Appeal. This should occur within thirty (30) working days of the date of the establishment or review of the IPP.
- 6.3 Upon receipt of a request for an appeal, the Department of Education *School Board and Ministerial Appeal Guide* and relevant School Board policies and procedures will be forwarded to the parent/guardians requesting the appeal within ten (10) working days.
- 6.4 The request will be reviewed to determine if the program planning process has been followed and if the appeal is based on the outcomes and/or placement as indicated in the IPP.
- 6.5 If the decision is to refer back to program planning this information is communicated to all appropriate parties.
- 6.6 If the decision is to grant the appeal and the request is received by June 21, a date will be established within forty (40) working days and the date, time and location of the appeal will be distributed to all appropriate parties.
- 6.7 Requests received at the office of the Superintendent on or before June 21 will be heard before July 15, if granted. Requests received after that date will be heard on or before September 15.
- 6.8 A School Board appeal committee, set by the Board, hears and decides the appeal. This committee consists of the Director of Program, a school principal and an individual, not employed by the HRSB, with educational experience and expertise. All appropriate parties will be notified of the appeal decision within ten (10) working days of the appeal.

7.0 TRANSPORTATION

- 7.1 In accordance with the Education Act and Regulations (June 1997) and Board Policy, any student requiring transportation because of special needs shall be conveyed from home to school at the Board's cost, irrespective of distance.
- 7.2 School principals will provide information to the Coordinator of Pupil Transportation as to those students affected.