



Special Education and Section Programs

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The Toronto District School Board is exploring ways of transitioning towards greater inclusion in Special Education programs. Providing children with special education needs with the instructional support and services they need within the regular program in neighbourhood schools, will improve achievement and well-being for all students.

We know that inclusion isn't just about keeping students in the regular classroom. It's about meeting the needs of all students in a class. Collaboration between regular classroom teachers and special education staff will help us find the most effective ways to meet the needs of every student.

As part of this transition, we have reviewed the Home School Program (HSP). Currently, many students in Grades 1 to 8 receive a half-day of special education instruction in the HSP. In most schools, this support is provided apart from the regular program. A number of schools have already chosen to support these students in the regular classroom with great success.

We believe we can do a better job for all students in the regular class with appropriate resources beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, we will start phasing out primary grade placements in HSP, beginning with no Grade 1 students admitted to the program. In the 2018-2019 school year, HSP will only support students in Grades 4 to 8. Teachers and educational assistants who currently assist HSP students will continue to do so, but schools will have greater flexibility in deciding how to deliver HSP support. Please see questions and answers below for more details.

Transitioning towards inclusion will require collaboration and the creation of positive and welcoming classroom environments that will enable all students to succeed.

Sincerely,

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Executive Superintendent
Special Education and Section 23 Programs
Toronto District School Board

SPECIAL EDUCATION – HOME SCHOOL PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What might HSP look like at my child's school next year?*

Students admitted to HSP may spend part of their day learning in a regular classroom and part separately with the HSP teacher. Sometimes, they may receive support individually while other times, it may take place in small groups. Some students currently assisted in a withdrawal setting may instead receive all of their support in their regular grade classrooms. It will vary from student to student, based on their learning needs.

2. *If my child entering Grade 1 in September has special education needs, what can I expect in terms of support?*

On a regular basis, regular classroom teachers make adjustments to their teaching and assessment methods to meet a wide variety of student learning needs in the classroom. Grade 1 students, who might previously have been admitted to HSP for special education instruction, will instead receive support in their regular classroom. Close collaboration between the classroom teacher, school-based special education staff and special education consultants will assist teachers in planning and delivering this “differentiated instruction”.

3. *If my child was in HSP this year, what will happen next year?*

Students in Grades 2 to 8 will continue to receive HSP support in the ways described above. Since one of our goals is greater flexibility for schools to respond to the needs of their students, the delivery model will vary from school to school. Each school principal can provide specific answers to how the program will be delivered in their schools.

4. *How will the effectiveness of changes to HSP delivery be evaluated?*

On an on-going basis, teachers are required to evaluate, monitor and report on the success of their students in meeting the Ministry of Education curriculum objectives identified in students' Individual Education Plans (IEP). Achievement data is also used as part of annual school improvement planning. Each school must address the three pillars of equity, achievement and well-being, using school-based measures and staff feedback to identify what is working well and areas that require attention. School superintendents can review school achievement data for the schools in their network and assist their school administrators in addressing identified needs. At the system level, the TDSB follows the progress of all students and of students with special education needs as a subset, through on-going analysis of achievement data in provincial report cards, progress reports and the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments.

5. *If I have questions or concerns, who do I contact?*

As we make changes to the delivery of special education programs and services, we continue to value active and meaningful collaboration with all stakeholders. If you have additional questions, we invite you to follow the updates on our website at www.tdsb.on.ca/specialeducation. You can also contact your child's school principal for more specific information about what HSP will look like for your child. If questions or concerns remain, the principal can help you connect with the appropriate school superintendent or special education department staff.

