



Special Education and Section Programs

April, 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We want every student in every school to be welcomed and included within the most enabling learning environment. The TDSB is 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.

As part of this transition, we have reviewed the Home School Program (HSP), which provides many students in Grades 2 to 8 with a half-day of instruction with a special education teacher. In most schools, this support is provided apart from the regular program. During the last few years, some schools have chosen to support these students in the regular classroom with great success.

We believe we can improve the learning environment for all students in the regular class with appropriate resources. Last September, we started phasing out primary grade placements in HSP. Currently, this program is no longer offered to students in Grade 1.

In the 2018-2019 school year, HSP will only support students in Grades 4 to 8. Teachers and educational assistants will continue supporting students in Grades 1, 2 and 3 in their regular classrooms. Please see questions and answers below for more details.

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

Sincerely,

Uton Robinson, Ed. D.
Executive Superintendent
Special Education and Section 23 Programs
Toronto District School Board

SPECIAL EDUCATION – HOME SCHOOL PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Home School Program (HSP)?

Students placed in 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 support in their regular grade classrooms with the special education teacher. It will vary from student to student, based on their learning needs. This program is currently offered to students in Grades 2 to 8. Starting September 2018, it will only support students in Grades 4 to 8.

If my child is entering Grade 1, 2 or 3 in September 2018 and 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. Grades 1, 2 and 3 students, who may have previously been placed in HSP for special education instruction, will instead receive support in their regular classroom. They may also be withdrawn for small group instruction for less than half of the instructional day. 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”. Children who are currently in Grade 1 will continue receiving support in their regular classroom or in a withdrawal setting.

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 Learning 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.

If I have questions or concerns, who can I contact?

As we make changes to the delivery of special education programs and services, we continue to value active and meaningful collaboration with parents/guardians and stakeholders. If you have additional questions, we invite you to visit our website at www.tdsb.on.ca/specialeducation. You can also contact your child’s school principal for more information about HSP. If you have additional questions or concerns, the principal can help you connect with the appropriate school superintendent.