



CHAPTER 8

Supporting Student Achievement and Well-Being

Elected school boards make a deep and direct contribution to the improvement of learning for all students through their leadership in building public understanding and engendering the commitment of their communities to valuing and sustaining high levels of student achievement.

The research is compelling – elected school boards make a difference. When the board of trustees moves to the higher levels of authentic governance that is truly student-centred and make teaching and learning their first priority, changes occur (Waters and Marzano).

Recent research on *Strong Districts and Their Leadership* (Dr. Kenneth Leithwood, 2013) supports the premise that trustees have an essential role in supporting student achievement and well-being through policy development, resource alignment and ensuring continued focus on the needs of children and students.

Curriculum

Curriculum policy documents from the Ministry of Education describe the overall and specific learning expectations for students in kindergarten through Grade 12, according to subject area. Curriculum

documents can be found on the Ministry of Education website at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html.

Full-Day Kindergarten

The *Education Act* requires that children be enrolled in a school program as of six years old. The *Act* also requires boards to offer full-day kindergarten (FDK) programs for four and five year olds. A majority of parents – approximately 95 per cent – send their children to publicly funded schools for kindergarten.

The FDK program is staffed by an educator team of a teacher and an early childhood educator (ECE). Through play-based learning and small group instruction, children develop a strong foundation for learning in all areas, including language and math, engage in healthy physical activities and the arts, and develop socially and emotionally through interaction with their peers and the educators who guide them. Through informal meetings, parent conferences or written reports, parents receive regular updates that include comments on the

child's learning. The reports also include suggestions for parents to support their child's learning.

Full-day kindergarten is complemented by a fee-based before-and-after-school program for four and five year olds that boards are required to offer where there is sufficient demand. These programs can be directly operated by the school board or delivered through a third party.

Child Care and the Early Years

Ontario is committed to building a system with affordable child care spaces and integrated early years programs and services that are responsive to the needs of children and families.

Licensed child care programs must meet and maintain specific provincial standards as set out in *The Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

These standards provide for the health, safety and developmental needs of the children. Many child care centres and programs serving





younger children are located in public schools. Child care, extended day programs, and early years programs are greatly affected by board and school policies such as rent and shared use of space. By working together, school boards, municipalities, and service providers can ensure a consistent, high quality educational experience for children and their families as they transition between child care and early years services and as they enter and progress through school.

To learn more about child care and early learning in Ontario, please visit: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare>.

Elementary and Secondary Education

Provincial curriculum documents outline the knowledge and skills that students must demonstrate at the end of each grade in each subject in all publicly funded elementary and secondary English-language schools. The subjects that make up the program of study for elementary students are the following:

- The Arts
- French (First Language)
- French as a Second Language
- Health and Physical Education
- Language
- Mathematics
- Native Studies

- Science and Technology
- Social Studies, History and Geography.

The Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)

The requirements for earning an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) are as follows:

- Students must earn a minimum of 30 credits, including 18 compulsory and 12 optional credits
- Students must meet the provincial secondary school literacy requirement
- Students must complete 40 hours of community involvement activities.

Details can be found in the policy document Ontario Schools Kindergarten to Grade 12. To learn more, visit: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/onschools_2016e.pdf.

Students who successfully complete a Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program as part of the requirements for their OSSD will receive a diploma with a SHSM red seal.

Compulsory and Optional Credits

Students must earn the following credits in order to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma:

18 compulsory credits

- Four English (one credit per grade)
- One French-as-a-Second Language
- Three Mathematics (at least one credit in Grade 11 or 12)
- Two Science
- One Arts
- One Canadian geography
- One Canadian history
- One Health and physical education
- 0.5 Civics
- 0.5 Career studies

plus:

- Three additional credits, consisting of one credit from each of the following groups:
 - Group 1: English, French as a Second Language, classical languages, international languages, Native languages, Native studies, Canadian and world studies, social sciences and humanities, guidance and career education, cooperative education
 - Group 2: French as a Second Language, business studies, health and physical education, the arts, and cooperative education
 - Group 3: French as a Second Language, science (Grade 11 or 12),

computer studies, technological education, cooperative education.

12 Optional Credits

These are selected from the courses available in the school's course calendar.

The Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC)

The Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) will be granted on request, to students who are leaving secondary school upon reaching the age of eighteen without having met the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. To be granted an OSSC, a student must have earned a minimum of 14 credits, distributed as follows:

7 required compulsory credits

- Two credits in English
- One credit in mathematics
- One credit in science
- One credit in Canadian history or Canadian geography
- One credit in health and physical education
- One credit in the arts, computer studies, or technological education

7 required optional credits

- Seven credits selected by the student from available courses.

Organization of Courses

All schools must offer a sufficient number of courses and appropriate types of courses to enable students to meet the diploma requirements.

In Grades 9 and 10, course types available are academic, applied and open. Academic courses develop students' knowledge and skills through the study of theory and abstract problems. Applied programs focus on the essential concepts of a subject and develop students' knowledge and skills through practical applications and concrete examples. Open courses, which comprise a set of expectations that are appropriate for all students, are designed to broaden students' knowledge and skills in subjects that reflect their interests and prepare them for active and rewarding participation in society. Locally developed compulsory credit courses in English, mathematics, science, French as a Second Language and Canadian history that can be counted as a compulsory



credit in that discipline are also available to students in Grades 9 and 10.

Students in Grades 11 and 12 may choose from five course types or pathways, four of which may be used for post-secondary destinations (apprenticeship

training, college, university, or the workplace) and a range of open courses across various disciplines.

Some students may change their educational goals as they proceed through secondary school. When they decide to embark on a new

pathway, they may find that they have not completed all of the prerequisite courses they need. Schools must make provisions to allow students to change pathways and must describe these provisions in their school's program/course calendar.

Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement (BIPSA)

The BIPSA is a working document that board staff create and that typically sets goals for improvement in areas such as numeracy, literacy, graduation rates and other program related initiatives.

The director of education and his/her staff are responsible for creating and implementing the BIPSA and must report annually to the board and the Ministry of Education the progress made by the board in achieving its goals.

Student Assessment and Reporting Student Achievement

The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning.

Growing Success is the Ontario Ministry of Education's policy on *Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools*

Grades 1-12 and can be found online at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growsuccess.pdf>.

Each curricular document from Grades 1-12 contain achievement charts which are used to evaluate how well students are achieving in relation to the overall curriculum expectations and these areas of achievement are reported on regularly. Standards of achievement are defined for each subject at four levels for four categories of learning: knowledge and understanding, thinking and investigation, communication, and application. In addition,

the elementary progress report card and elementary and secondary provincial report cards provide a record of the learning skills and work habits demonstrated by students in the following six categories: responsibility, organization, independent work, collaboration, initiative and self-regulation.

The achievement of elementary students is assessed regularly by teachers and a report is sent home to parents three times a year. This takes the form of an elementary progress report card between October 20 and November 20

followed by one provincial report card between January 20 and February 20 and a final report card towards the end of June of each school year. For Grades 1 to 6, teachers report student achievement using letter grades; for Grades 7 and 8, teachers report by assigning percentage grades (zero per cent to 100 per cent).

The achievement of secondary students is also assessed regularly by teachers and a report is sent home to parents three times a year for non-semestered schools and twice per semester for semestered





schools. Teachers indicate on the report card the level at which the student is achieving for each course by assigning percentage grades (zero per cent to 100 per cent).

In both the elementary and secondary panels a specifically designed standardized provincial report card is used for Grades 1 to 6, Grades 7 and 8 and

Grades 9 to 12 and can be customized only in specific sections for school boards.

Communication with parents and students about student achievement should be continuous throughout the year, by means such as parent-teacher or parent-student-teacher conferences, portfolios of student work,

student-led conferences, interviews, phone calls, checklists, and informal reports.

Provincial Testing

In 1995, the province created the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), an arms-length agency responsible for increasing accountability and promoting

improvement in Ontario's education system. EQAO's mandate is to "enhance the quality and accountability of the education system in Ontario and to work with the education community. This is achieved through student assessments that produce objective, reliable information, through the public release of this information and through the profiling of the value and use of EQAO data across the province."

EQAO develops, conducts and marks province-wide tests for all students in Grades 3, 6, 9 as well as the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), which is administered in Grade 10.

Teachers and administrators receive training support from the EQAO, along with a package of sample performance tasks. Samples and supporting information are also available on the EQAO website at www.eqao.com. Information for parents and students is also available on the website.

The EQAO individual school and board results are used to inform board-wide and school-based planning and practices in order to maximize the opportunities for success for all students.

EQAO Testing in Elementary Schools

The Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics are based on the reading, writing and mathematics expectations in the Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1 to 8. These assessments provide both individual, school and system data on students' achievement. The EQAO assessments require each student to demonstrate their skills and knowledge of reading, writing and math.

EQAO Testing in Secondary Schools

In cooperation with EQAO, school boards administer two annual tests to secondary students:

- The Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics is an assessment designed to measure student achievement of Grade 9 mathematics expectations for the applied and academic courses. It provides valuable data for student improvement and program implementation. Teachers have the option of including the marks with students' report card grades. The testing is conducted in January for students enrolled in a first-semester course, and near year-end for students studying in a

full-year course or second-semester course.

- The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), written in Grade 10, is designed to assess the reading and writing skills that students are expected to have learned across all subjects by the end of Grade 9, as outlined in the Ontario Curriculum. Students are assigned a pass or fail rating, not a score. Those who pass receive notification of success only. Those who fail receive a performance profile to guide their remedial work. The OSSLT is the standard method for students to obtain the graduation literacy requirement for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). All schools must provide students who fail the OSSLT with opportunities to receive remedial help and to repeat the test. Students who are unsuccessful may choose to take the grade 11 Literacy course as a form of remedial follow-up. Students who fail the test may also enroll in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC). Students who pass the OSSLC will have met the graduation requirement. The OSSLC is a full credit course.

National and International Tests

Ontario also participates in several national and international standardized tests. These tests are administered to random samples of students and the results provide an indication of the strengths and weaknesses of Ontario's education system when compared with many other jurisdictions around the world and across Canada.

- There are various international tests, such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS); these are conducted through the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test is conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- The Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) conducted through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) tests random samples of students in reading, mathematics and science. It was administered for

the first time in 2007 and replaced the previous Canada-wide School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP).

Positive School Climate

In recent years there have been a number of legislative changes which stipulated requirements for school boards to review and implement policies and procedures to create positive school climates for learning and working for students and staff. The research identifies a very clear link between student achievement and school climate where students and staff are feeling included, valued, respected and safe.

Programs and activities integrated within the Ontario curriculum and integral to the fabric of a school are essential in a prevention and intervention strategy approach to support students in developing positive behaviours. Some examples of these programs are character development, anti-bullying, positive space, mentorship and peer leadership. In addition, school boards use school climate surveys, at least once every two years, to collect information from pupils, staff, and parents to determine the board's

effectiveness in promoting positive school climate.

For more information, please see PPM 145 (Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour) at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.pdf>.

Special Education

Every school board is required by the *Education Act* to provide special education programs and services for its exceptional students. An exceptional student is defined in the *Act* as "a pupil whose behavioural, communication, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need a placement in a special education program by a committee ... of the board."

A school board must detail, in its Special Education Report, how the school board will meet the special education needs of students with exceptionalities. The programs or services required to facilitate learning by a student with exceptionalities will vary depending on the strengths and needs of the student. Each school board determines the range of special education programs and services required to meet the needs of its students with exceptionalities, and must describe these in its Special



Education Report. Each school board's Special Education Report must be current at the beginning of each school year and must be available at the school board's office for review by the public. A school board may provide its own special education programs and services, or it may purchase them from another school board. Ontario Regulation 306/90: Special Education Programs and Services provides additional information.

Special Education Advisory Committee

Every school board must have a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) that monitors the board's special education programs, services, and plans. Details of this requirement are set out in Ontario Regulation 464/97: Special Education Advisory Committee.

The SEAC is composed of representatives of local associations, members of the school board, and, in specific cases, other members of the community. Each local association that meets the

criteria should be invited to participate in the SEAC, up to a maximum of 12 representatives. A new SEAC is formed every four years following the election of the board of trustees.

The board must appoint three trustees or 25 per cent of the total number of trustees on the board (rounded down), whichever is fewer. Where the regulations require a school board to have one or more First Nation representatives, its SEAC must also have one or two First Nation members to represent the interests of First Nation students.



The SEAC must meet at least 10 times in each school year. It is mandated to make recommendations for establishing, developing, and delivering special education programs offered by the school board. The board must give the SEAC an opportunity to be heard before making any decisions on SEAC recommendations.

Further, the board must ensure that the SEAC has an opportunity to participate in the review of the board's Special Education Report.

The SEAC also has the opportunity to review the board's annual budget process, and financial statements. More information

is available at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/seac/>.

Identification and Placement of Students with Exceptionalities

The identification and placement of students with exceptionalities is governed by Ontario Regulation 181/98: Identification and Placement of Exceptional Pupils. Students with exceptionalities are identified by special education Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs). Every school board must establish at least one IPRC. Each IPRC must be made up of at least three individuals and at least one of these must be a principal or a supervisory officer. Trustees may not be IPRC members.

The IPRC is mandated to collect information about a student who has been referred to the committee. This information must include an educational assessment and may also include a psychological assessment and/or a medical assessment if these are deemed appropriate by the committee and if the parents (and the student, if 16 or over) approve. The parents and the student (if 16 or over) have the right to participate in all IPRC discussions about

the student, be present when the IPRC makes its decision, and bring an advocate to help them.

The IPRC's written decision must indicate the following:

- Whether the student has been identified as exceptional and, if so, the categories and definitions of any exceptionalities
- A description of the student's strengths and needs
- The placement decision
- Any recommendations regarding special education services and programs.

The needs of the vast majority of students with exceptionalities can be addressed in a regular classroom with the help of instructional, environmental, and/or assessment accommodations or some curriculum modification or both. The regulation states that before considering the option of placement in a special education class, an IPRC must first consider whether placement in a regular class, with appropriate special education services, would meet the student's needs and be consistent with parental preferences. Placement options that may be considered include: regular classroom with indirect support, regular

classroom with resource assistance, regular classroom with withdrawal assistance, special education class with partial integration, and special education class full time. If the IPRC has decided that the student should be placed in a special education class, the decision must state the reasons.

In some instances, a student may need to attend a provincial school for the deaf, blind, or deafblind, or a provincial demonstration school for students with severe learning disabilities.

The identification and placement of a student who has been identified and placed by an IPRC must be reviewed at least annually by the IPRC, although parents may provide a written statement to waive the IPRC review. Also, the IPRC must review the placement if the parents make this request to the school principal any time after the placement has been in effect for three months.

Parents who disagree with the IPRC's decision may:

- Within 15 days of receiving notice of the decision, request a follow-up meeting with the IPRC to discuss the decision

OR

- Within 30 days of receiving notice of the decision, file a notice of

appeal with the Special Education Appeal Board.

Parents who remain dissatisfied after the follow-up meeting may also, within 15 days of receiving notice of the reviewed decision, file a notice of appeal. Many parents may agree to a resolution of the dispute through mediation before proceeding with an appeal.

The special education placement decision may be implemented if one of the following applies:

- The parent has consented in writing
- The parent has failed to initiate the appeal process within the specified time period following the IPRC decision or the Special Education Appeal Board process
- The parent has appealed to the Special Education Tribunal but subsequently abandoned the appeal
- The Special Education Tribunal has directed the board to place the student.

Pending an IPRC meeting and decision, a student is entitled to an appropriate education program. This program must be appropriate to the student's apparent strengths and needs, must include education services to meet the student's apparent needs, and must be in a regular class if this meets



the student's needs and is consistent with the preferences of the parents.

The broad categories of exceptionalities set out in the *Education Act* [s. 1(1)] (Behaviour, Communication, Intellectual, Physical and Multiple) are designed to address the wide range of conditions that may affect a student's ability to learn. They do not exclude any medical condition, whether diagnosed or not, that can lead to particular types of learning difficulties. All students with demonstrable learning-based needs are entitled to appropriate accommodations in the form of special education programs and services, including classroom-based accommodations. The

determining factor for the provision of special education programs or services is not any specific diagnosed or undiagnosed medical condition, but rather the needs of the individual students based on the individual assessment of strengths and needs.

Special Education Appeal Board

The board must establish a special education appeal board (SEAB) if it receives a notice of appeal. Each SEAB has the following members, who must not have had any prior involvement with the case:

- A person nominated by the school board who must not be an employee of the board or the

Ministry of Education; the person does not need to be a supervisory officer

- A person nominated by the parent or student
- A chair selected jointly by the two members.

If the nominees are unable to agree on a chair, the appointment is made by the ministry's regional manager.

The SEAB will convene a meeting or meetings with representatives of the school board, the parents and any other person who, in the opinion of the SEAB chair, may be able to contribute information on the matters under appeal.

The SEAB has two options: it may agree with the IPRC and recommend to the school board the implementation of the IPRC's decision; or, it may disagree with the IPRC and make an alternative recommendation concerning identification and/or placement. The recommendation must be forwarded to the board within three days of the end of the meeting. The board must, within 30 days, decide on the action it will take and inform the parent of its decision. The notice to the parent must explain the parent's further right to appeal to the Ontario Special Education (English or French) Tribunal.

Special Education Tribunal

Following receipt of the notice of decision by the school board, a parent who disagrees with the board's decision may appeal to the Special Education Tribunal (SET), which is established by the Ministry of Education under the *Education Act*. The appeal proceeds before the SET as a formal hearing between the parents and the school board. At the conclusion of the hearing, the SET may dismiss the appeal, or grant the appeal and make any order it

considers necessary for the identification or placement of the student. The decision of the SET is final and binding on the parents and the board. However, the parents or board have recourse to the courts if the SET makes an error in law or in procedural fairness.

Before the tribunal agrees to hear the appeal, the tribunal secretary asks both parties whether they will consider mediation.

Individual Education Plan

Regulation requires that an Individual Education Plan (IEP) be developed for students with exceptionalities. The requirements for IEPs are further set out in the Ministry of Education's policy document *Individual Education Plans: Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation, 2000*.

Every student who has been identified as having an exceptionality by an IPRC must be provided with an





IEP within 30 school days of the start of the placement. School boards may also provide a special education program and/or related services for a child who has not been identified as having an exceptionality. In such cases, an IEP should be developed for that child. The plan must be developed by the student's teachers, under the supervision of the principal and in consultation with the parents and the student, if the student is 16 or older.

An IEP is a written plan that describes the student's learning strengths and areas of need. It identifies the special education program and/or services that will be provided.

Key components of an IEP include:

- Any accommodations, such as special teaching strategies, support services, or assistive devices, that a student needs to achieve learning expectations, including accommodations to be provided during provincial assessments
 - Any modified learning expectations, reflecting changes to the expectations set out in the Ontario curriculum
 - Any alternative learning expectations for program areas not found in the Ontario curriculum, such as personal care skills, social skills, and anger management training
- Information on how the student's progress will be monitored, evaluated, and reported to parents
 - A transition plan for all students who have an IEP, whether or not they have been identified as having an exceptionality by an IPRC; this includes students identified as having an exceptionality solely on the basis of giftedness. This is required by PPM 156 (Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs). Further information on the transition plan is available at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/ppm156.pdf.

School boards have been encouraged by the province to develop the tools and processes needed to examine the quality of their IEPs against the requirements set out in the standards.

Further information on the development, implementation, and monitoring of IEPs is available in the ministry document *The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide*, 2004.

Further information about special education policies and procedures can be found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html>.

Adult and Continuing Education

Continuing education enables people to engage in purposeful learning activities at various points in their lives. It involves the provision of credit and non-credit courses for individuals who wish to study part-time, or full-time for a short term, outside the program offered in elementary or secondary schools. Programs offered through Adult and Continuing Education may be provided by a school board and may include:

- Adult Day School
- Adult Continuing Education Day School

- Night School
- Summer School
- Correspondence self-study including e-learning
- Secondary crossover or transfer courses
- Elementary and secondary reach-ahead courses
- Elementary international language courses
- Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition* (PLAR) for mature students
- Adult Native language

**Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for mature students is a formal evaluation and accreditation process carried out under the direction of a school principal. Through this process the principal may grant secondary school credits to mature students.*

Secondary school credit courses for independent study at a distance that meet the requirements of the Ontario Ministry of Education are available through TVOntario's Independent Learning Centre (ILC). For more information visit www.ilc.org.

Many school boards also offer programs funded by other ministries, including:

- Adult non-credit programs for English or French as a Second Language and Citizenship offered by the

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

- Adult non-credit programs for Literacy and Basic Skills offered by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.