



ASD

Special Education Program Guide

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER SELF-CONTAINED CLASS PROGRAM

Self-Contained Class Placements

Grades 4 to 8
(maximum of 6 students)

“All student’s learn best when instruction, resources and the learning environment are well suited to their particular strengths, interests, need and stages of readiness.”

- Learning For All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction, Kindergarten to Grade 12

Purpose of the Placement

- Support the strengths and needs of students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and deficits in information and/or sensory processing to such a high degree that the student is unable to function successfully in a regular class
- Modify the environment and provide methods of instruction that are Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) based and compatible with the student's learning profile
- Enable the student to experience academic, social and communication growth and increase both self-advocacy and independence skills
- Offer a two-year placement to support the development of learning skills, coping strategies, self-advocacy and independence skills which can be generalized to a regular class placement in their home school

Student Profile

- Ability to progress through Ontario Curriculum with accommodations and modifications as required
- Self-regulation and/or sensory integration challenges or social communication deficits which undermine success in a regular classroom placement
- May present with behaviour which poses a physical threat to self or others

Admission Criteria

A student who:

- Has been identified as an exceptional student through the IPRC process under the category of Communication: Autism
- Requires a higher level of structured monitoring, individual attention and planning around their particular learning style and modification to the environment
- Has had ongoing documented interventions in a regular classroom placement with support from the ASD Resource Team, and
- Is capable of accessing the Ontario curriculum with accommodations and/or modifications to expectations and the learning environment.

Criteria for Change in Placement

- Has demonstrated gains in social and/or academic domains which can be generalized to a regular class placement in their home school
- Evidence of on-going successful integration
- Student would be better served in another special education program
- Completion of two-year placement*

*Application for continued placement will be considered by the system placement committee upon the recommendation of the school team based on the application criteria

Program Resources

Special Education
Teacher

Educational
Assistant(s)

Learning Support
Teacher

Environmental Considerations

- Post daily visual schedules (i.e. subjects, integration, field trips, special events, life skills)
- Create clearly defined, labelled activity areas (i.e. individual work spaces, group work areas, conferencing area, leisure reading/games area, break area)
- Provide appropriately labelled, organized, and accessible learning materials, including manipulatives
- Provide access to assistive technology
- Provide varied learning spaces including individual work stations, small group and whole class
- Post visual supports as required to support a specific purpose
- Reduce visual clutter and sensory stimulation
- Provide an area within the classroom for students to access as required for self-regulation (reflection and calming)
- Develop awareness of the sensory sensitivities of students (e.g. - lighting, noise, scent) and organize the classroom accordingly
- Supply each classroom with a means of communication to contact the Emergency Response Team (e.g., portable two-way radio)



Literacy

- Establish a daily literacy learning block of no less than 100 minutes
- Implement a comprehensive balanced literacy program consisting of: read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, modelled writing, shared writing, guided instruction and independent writing (Guides to Effective Literacy Instruction and Adolescent Literacy Guide)
- Conduct reading conferences (minimum of 1 reading conference daily that includes a running record)
- Integrate oral communication, word study and media literacy

Numeracy

- Numeracy instruction must help students to identify relationships between mathematical concepts and everyday situations and make connections between mathematics and other subject areas.
- Students must develop the ability to use mathematics to extend and apply their knowledge in other curriculum areas including science, music and language.
- Establish a mathematics learning block of 60 minutes structured in 3 parts (activation, investigation, consolidation)
- Emphasize mathematical processes, varied student thinking, and the importance of flexibility in the development of important mathematical ideas (see TIPS 4RM , Guides to Effective Instruction , Gap Closing)
- Create a MathTalk Learning Community where students assist one another's learning of mathematics by engaging in meaningful mathematical discourse

Effective Academic Programming

- Develop and maintain individual profile of strengths and needs based on information from relevant documentation (e.g. psychological assessments, educational assessments)
- Ensure programming supports the expectations outlined in the students' IEPs
- Assess for learning in order to determine a baseline or starting point for programming for each student
- Understand students' cognitive and/or (as applicable) language, physical, adaptive capabilities and work in consultation with the school's Program Development Team for clarification when necessary
- Have knowledge of curriculum at different grade levels
- Be aware that academic success builds self-esteem, which in turn often reduces behaviour difficulties
- Incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning and employ methods of differentiated instruction and assessment
- Develop knowledge of and use assistive technology and specialized equipment
- Use student-based programming, taking into consideration each student's different interests, learning profile, and level of academic functioning (e.g. games, hands-on activities, group projects)
- Engage with colleague in professional development of instructional practices (e.g. in-school PD with Instructional Coach)

“Every Student is unique and each must have opportunities to achieve success according to his or her own interests, abilities and goals.”

- Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools

Effective Alternative Programming

- Develop an understanding of the defining characteristics of ASD and the special challenges this will create in the educational milieu (e.g. academic abilities and social/communication, self-regulation and organization difficulties, etc.)
- Develop an understanding of current trends/practices in the field of Autism (e.g. ABA Principles and Methods)
- Develop, create and implement specific programs addressing challenges in the areas of Social Skills, Communication Skills, Behaviour and Transitions as well as additional areas as required (e.g., assistive technology, personal hygiene, etc.)
- Develop knowledge and understanding of various secondary diagnoses: anxiety, depression, ADHD, non-verbal LD, OCD
- Create and update transition plans
- Ensure programs support the alternative expectations outlined in the students' IEP - as applicable
- Work in consultation with the multi-disciplinary team, the educational assistants, outside agencies, and community resources to develop appropriate alternative programming
- Provide explicit teaching of social skills with a focus on (as applicable) social boundaries, reading social cues, self esteem building, positive relationships, goal setting, making choices, gaining control, controlling impulses, reducing aggression towards self and others, and/or developing power/insight into triggers
- Teach self advocacy skills, foster independence to reduce learned helplessness
- Provide alternative curriculum that focuses on students' greatest area of needs, as well as strengths
- Be aware of the continuum of alternative programming expectations (e.g. teaching a student to return a greeting before teaching a student to spontaneously greet someone)
- Prioritize alternative programming expectations (e.g. make self-regulation a priority over teaching curriculum, or make decreasing aggression a priority over teaching a student how to put on a coat or write a paragraph, etc.)
- Teach and reinforce strategies for organizational skills, implement specific strategies to help students organize materials, and to develop time management skills
- Foster communication skill development focusing on body language, visual and verbal cues, social language, role modelling, etc.
- Teach strategies to address anxiety, anger and fear of failure enabling students to identify triggers and to act accordingly
- Include opportunities to develop and practice social communication skills on a daily basis both inside and outside of the classroom

Effective Teaching Strategies

- Universal design for learning and differentiated instruction
- Use a structured delivery model with clear routines and expectations
- Provide clear instructions that are broken down into sequential steps
- Use strategies to address various learning modalities (e.g. Visual, Auditory, Tactile/Kinesthetic)
- Use universal supports (e.g. visual schedules, mini-schedules, charts, diagrams, etc.)
- Provide ongoing reinforcement informed by interest inventories
- Pair reinforcement with verbal praise (praise effort as well as specific behaviour)
- Use task analysis or chaining techniques (e.g. breaking a task down into its steps to be followed for completion)
- Follow least preferred activities by preferred activities
- Use modeling, and, when appropriate provide a model of a finished product
- Chunk information, allow for processing time and provide opportunities for breaks
- Provide multiple opportunities for re-teaching
- Reduce homework assignments whenever possible
- Maximize support and use of personnel to facilitate independence
- Develop knowledge of prompt hierarchy reflected in prompting techniques
- Use ABA strategies such as prompting, shaping and fading
- Include opportunities for working individually, in a small group and with a large group
- Incorporate strategies to support student transitions between various activities and settings

Classroom Management

- Consider students' diagnosis, cognitive abilities, social/ emotional/cultural backgrounds and behavioural needs in program planning
- Provide and reinforce a clear, structured program with predictable routines
- Collect baseline and Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence (ABC) data when targeting a behaviour and developing a behaviour plan with both short and long term goals incorporating positive reinforcement of replacement behaviour
- Behaviour programs may include any or all of: self-esteem building, making choices, gaining control, personal power/insight into triggers, goal setting
- Teach self-regulatory skills (e.g. - recognizing triggers, calming strategies) and self-advocacy skills (e.g. - asking for help appropriately)
- Be aware of the Management of Aggressive Behaviour Procedure and the need for staff to be trained in and use Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) techniques
- Create an environment that fosters intrinsic motivation by providing opportunities for success through appropriate academic programming
- Maintain regular communication between home and school
- Provide behaviour management information to drivers and communicate regularly with them to ensure follow up
- Provide step by step explicit behavioural expectations that are posted visually
- Teach and model turn taking skills and appropriate ways of gaining attention
- Work in collaboration with the Principal or Vice-Principal when behavioural difficulties arise

Assessment and Evaluation

- Use of Provincial Report Card to report on student programming
- Ensure that assessment and evaluation practices are linked to those outlined on the IEP
- Allow students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways (e.g. oral, product, demonstration, drawings, maps, collages, dioramas, tape recorded answers, poster charts, videos, etc.) as well as paper/pencil tasks
- Develop and use evaluation tools which measure student growth during the study of a topic or unit and that are suitable to the needs of the students (e.g. ongoing anecdotal checklists; checklists to target specific skills such as: use rubrics; use student portfolios; in-class questioning; oral tests; one to one teacher conferences; written tests/exams)
- Provide students with the expectations being assessed and explain how they are being assessed (e.g. provide models, review checklists, etc.)
- Teach and provide opportunities for student reflection and self-assessment (e.g. student created rubrics, checklists, joint goal setting, questioning, etc.)
- Provide assessment using methods suitable to the needs of the student (e.g. allow for oral tests, portfolios, work samples, reword questions, etc.)
- Use ABC (Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequences) charts, graphing data, behaviour plans and tally sheets for data collection for behaviours of concern
- Provide appropriate accommodations to support student learning (e.g. extended time for tests/exams, scribing or use of assistive technology)

Integration

- Be aware that some students may integrate more than others, but that the goal is to promote generalization of skills and develop independence
- Ensure students integrate into classes with age appropriate peers in order to foster appropriate social skills development
- Establish expectations for program delivery and assessment and reporting by the regular classroom teacher supporting integration
- Ensure that receiving classrooms are well prepared for integration (implementation of inclusive practices, peer awareness, priming of student, etc.)
- Provide the regular classroom teachers with specific background information about the student, guidelines for interaction, specific behaviour programs, and goals for integration
- Establish opportunities for ongoing communication between sending and receiving teachers to support successful integration
- Involve students in whole-school initiatives (e.g. assemblies, special events, etc.)
- Provide reverse integration opportunities (e.g. reading buddies, cooking buddies, peer tutors, etc.)
- Offer professional learning opportunities for teachers supporting integration (e.g. staff meetings)
- Ensure the information related to Health and Safety are communicated to the receiving teacher (e.g. Safety Plans, Medical Emergency Plans)
- Foster same age peer interactions (e.g. lunch, recess, intramurals)

“All student’s will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences.” - Achieving Excellence: Our Renewed Vision For Education in Ontario

System Support

ASD Resource

Most students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) attend their home school and are supported in regular class placements through the ASD Resource Program. The Itinerant ASD Resource Teacher may provide in-service to schools hosting ASD self-contained class programs. They may also engage with classroom teachers in collaborative professional learning activities to develop professional practices in relation to supporting students with Autism. Students transitioning to secondary school are supported by the ASD Resource Program.

Speech and Language Pathology

As part of the spectrum of students services provided by Thames Valley District School Board, Speech and Language Services staff support students in JK-12 using an educational model of service delivery, and a variety of intervention methods. Students are referred for Speech and Language Services through school-based Program Development Teams. SLP's work with classroom teachers and other support staff using an integrative approach which incorporates goals as a basis for speech and language intervention.

Psychological Services

Psychological Services staff provide ongoing consultation to teacher, learning coordinators, principals, and parents regarding referred students. In the consultation process, parents and educational personnel may receive assistance in the interpretation of psychological assessment results and implications for classroom programming. Psychological services staff also support problem solving, decision making and program development for students with learning, social-emotional, behavioural, and intellectual needs. Individual psychological assessments may be completed upon the recommendation of the Program Development Team in consultation with Psychological Services staff.

School Counselling and Social Work Services

School Support Counsellors, FNMI Counsellors and Social Workers provide short-term individual, family and group counselling to help students who are experiencing social-emotional and mental health barriers to learning. Supports are provided for issues such as mental health concerns, emotions management, coping skills, peer problems, conflict resolution, social skills, life skills, self-esteem and family concerns. Intervention approaches are strength-based, focused on building resiliency and connecting to community resources. School Counselling and Social Work Services can be accessed upon referral by the school team, parent/guardian or student (over the age of 16).

Acronyms Related to Special Education:

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder
DD: Developmental Disability
D/HH: Deaf and Hard of Hearing
EA: Educational Assistant
IEP: Individual Education Plan
IPRC: Identification, Placement and Review Committee
LD: Learning Disability
LHIN: Local Health Integration Network

LST: Learning Support Teacher
MID: Mild Intellectual Disability
OT: Occupational Therapist
PDT: Program Development Team
PT: Physiotherapist
SLP: Speech and Language Pathologist
SEA: Special Equipment Amount
SEAC: Special Education Advisory Committee
TVDSB: Thames Valley District School Board