



PARENT/GUARDIAN  
GUIDE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

2023-2024

Niagara Children's Centre School  
Authority



Dear Parents/Guardians

Welcome to the Niagara Children's Centre School! Staff and parents/guardians are partners in education and we encourage you to become as involved as possible in your child's education. We value ongoing communication between home and school and believe this partnership is a vital part of your child's success at our school and throughout their educational journey.

We trust the information gathered in this Handbook will help you get better acquainted with the special education services provided at the Niagara Children's Centre School (NCCSA).

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or need more information.

***Catherine Hodson, Principal***

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| School Hours          |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Morning Classes Begin | 9:00 am                                |
| Lunch                 | 11:30 am - 12:10 pm                    |
| Fitness Breaks        | 1:50 pm - 2:05 pm<br>2:05 pm - 2:20 pm |
| Dismissal             | 3:10 pm - 3:25 pm                      |

Visit our website at - [Niagara Children's Centre School Authority](http://Niagara Children's Centre School Authority)

# About the Niagara Children's Centre School Authority

As a centre of excellence, the Niagara Children's Centre School provides individualized instruction that is designed to meet your child's individualized learning and motivational needs. Our school supports students from 4 to 21 years of age with multi-learning and physical exceptionalities. Our specialist teachers, therapists and other professionals utilize a family centred care approach to building student success in early literacy and numeracy development, augmentative and alternative communication skills as well as engaging students to be lifelong learners through building self-esteem and self-advocacy skills.

## Mission/Vision/Values

Mission Statement: Weaving education and therapy together to help children with special needs succeed at school, at home and within their community

Vision: A leader in the field of special education: preparing students, families and communities for success

Values: The children and families we serve are at the heart of Niagara Children's Centre School.

We show this through our:

- Care
- Respect
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Collaboration
- Innovation



## **What Special Services are provided by the Board?**

The Niagara Children's Centre School admits students who can benefit from interdisciplinary intervention programs for students with complex needs and require a specific period (1-2 years) of specialized educational and therapeutic programming.

The academic programming, based on the Ontario curriculum, focuses on the acquisition of early literacy and numeracy skills. Strategies determined by physical, occupational and speech-language therapies are integrated into the child's day to support their participation in educational programming. Professional therapists, provided by the Niagara Children's Centre work in consultation with the classroom team of special education teachers and educational assistants, to develop individualized programming to meet the unique needs of each student at the School Authority.

## **The Admission Criteria**

*To be eligible to apply:*

- Student must be between the age of 4 (by December 31, 2022) and 21.
- Student must reside in the Regional Municipality of Niagara.
- The student must have complex needs and meet the criteria for active intervention in two or more of the following therapy areas:

| Therapy Area              | Area of Need  |
|---------------------------|---|
| Physiotherapy             | Moderate to Severe impairment in gross motor development                                      |
| Occupational Therapy      | Moderate to Severe impairment in fine motor development and functional or daily living skills |
| Speech Language Pathology | Moderate to Severe impairment in receptive, expressive language and/or speech development     |

\*children who require speech and language intervention as well as development of an alternative or augmentative communication system would be considered as having needs in two areas.

## **Our Program Process**

- Identification of the child's strengths and specific needs
- Intervention to develop strategies that address the child's individual needs
- Accommodations and modifications to meet each child's development
- An individual Education Plan (IEP) for each student
- Support to the family in preparing for transitioning to a community school
- Support for community schools when students transition into their classes

## **What is a Special Education Service?**

Special education services are defined in the Education Act as the facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program.

- is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation; and
- includes a plan (called an Individual Education Plan or IEP) containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

## **What is an IEP?**

An Individual Education Plan is a written plan of action. It is a working document which describes the strengths and needs of an individual exceptional pupil and the special education program and services established to meet the pupil's needs. An Individual Education Plan is developed for students who may require curriculum adaptations for their specific learning needs. It creates opportunities for parents, teachers, and others involved with the student to collaboratively identify individual learning needs and to develop specific teaching and learning strategies and/or curriculum adaptations which will address these needs.

The IEP must be developed for your child, in consultation with you. It must include:

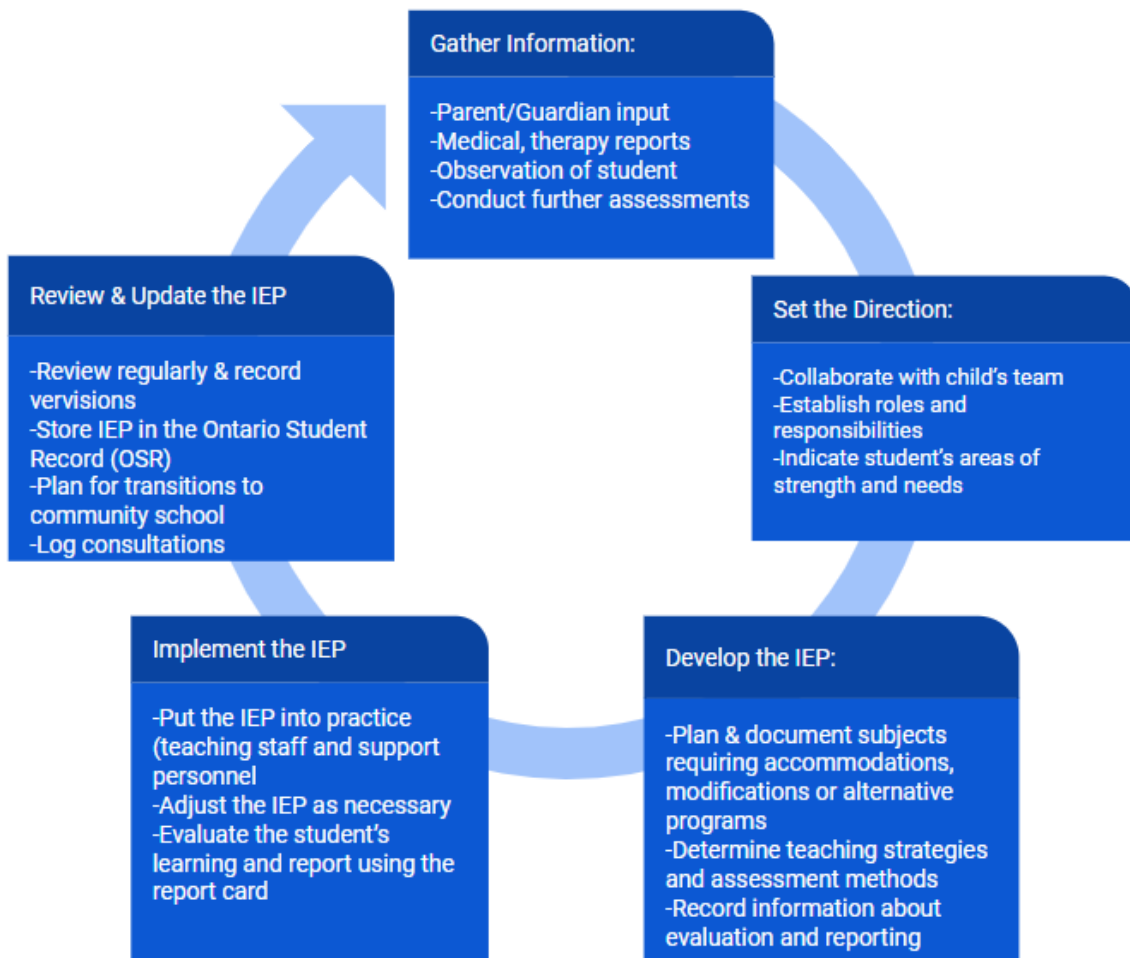
- ✓ specific educational expectations;
- ✓ an outline of the special education program and services that will be received;
- ✓ a statement about the methods by which your child's progress will be reviewed; and
- ✓ a plan for transition.

The IEP must be completed within 30 school days after your child has been placed in the program, and the principal must ensure that you receive a copy of it. Parents/guardians are important partners and are encouraged to actively participate in the development of the individual education plan and to sign it once completed.

### **What happens once an Individual Education Plan is in place?**

The Individual Education Plan will evolve as a student grows and matures. Within each term, a student's goals and needs are reviewed. Regular communication with the parents is essential to the success of the individual education plan

### **Phases of the IEP Process at NCCSA**



## **What is an IPRC?**

An Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) meet to determine whether a student is exceptional and what placement and program will best support the student. This committee of educators will meet with you to discuss the special education needs of your child. If your child is over 16 years old, they are invited to participate in the meeting. In collaboration with you, the team will make decisions on how best to meet the needs of your child. This meeting takes place annually to review the decision but can be held more frequently when change and collaboration are needed. The committee has three required team members: a principal chairs the meeting and two other staff members take part. As the parent/student, you play an important role in helping the committee make good decisions about your child. Parents/guardians are encouraged to ask questions at the meeting and to provide the IPRC with any relevant information they consider important to the decisions of the IPRC.

## **IPRCs at the Niagara Children's Centre School**

Students who attend the Niagara Children's Centre School meet the admission criteria and are on the caseload of the Niagara Children's Centre. Parents/Guardians must agree to the school placement as opposed to placement within a local district school board. Placement is short term (usually 1-2 years) and is goal specific for children who have moderate to severe needs in at least two therapeutic disciplines, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Language Pathology and Augmentative & Alternative Communication.

The IPRC process is not usually utilized in this specialized setting. Receiving school boards follow their own IPRC processes as needed once the student is registered at their community school. This supports a streamlined process for parents/guardians and avoids duplication of the IPRC process. The IPRC process only occurs at NCCSA at the request of parents/guardians in accordance with Regulation 181/98.

The school authority provides only special education services to a specific group of identified students and does not provide for services of other exceptionalities.

The number of referrals to the school program is transient and varies from year to year depending on local demographics. No new students who have been admitted to the program have received an IPRC in the last 12 years. Our "Parents/Guardians Guide to Special Education" is available for all parents.

Parents/Guardians may request team meetings to discuss their child's progress at any time.

## What is the role of the IPRC?

The IPRC will:

- decide whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional;
- identify the areas of your child's exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education;
- decide an appropriate placement for your child and review the identification and placement at least once in each school year.

## Who is Identified as an Exceptional Pupil?

The Education Act defines an exceptional pupil as "a pupil whose behavioral, communicational, intellectual, physical, and/or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program." Students are identified according to the categories and definition of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.

## Categories and Exceptionalities

| Category                 | Ministry of Education Definition  |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Behaviour</b>         |   |
| Behaviour                | A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance, and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:<br>a) an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;<br>b) excessive fears or anxieties;<br>c) a tendency to compulsive reaction;<br>d) an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof |
| <b>Communication</b>     |   |
| Autism                   | A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:<br>a) disturbances in:<br>– rate of educational development;<br>– ability to relate to the environment;<br>– mobility;<br>– perception, speech, and language;<br>b) lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language   |
| Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing | An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.  |
| Language Impairment      | A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, and which may:<br>a) involve one or more of the form, content, and function of   |



|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
|                              | <p>language in communication; and</p> <p>b) include one or more of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- language delay;</li> <li>- dysfluency;</li> <li>- voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.</li> </ul>   |
| Speech Impairment            | <p>A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.</p>  |
| Learning Disability          | <p>One of a number of neurodevelopmental disorders that persistently and significantly has an impact on the ability to learn and use academic and other skills and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- affects the ability to perceive or process verbal or non-verbal information in an effective and accurate manner in students who have assessed intellectual abilities that are at least in the average range;</li> <li>- results in (a) academic underachievement that is inconsistent with the intellectual abilities of the student (which are at least in the average range) and/or (b) academic achievement that can be maintained by the student only with extremely high levels of effort and/or with additional support;</li> <li>- results in difficulties in the development and use of skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, mathematics, and work habits and learning skills;</li> <li>- may typically be associated with difficulties in one or more cognitive processes, such as phonological processing; executive functions (e.g. self-regulation of behaviour and emotions, planning, organizing of thoughts and activities, prioritizing, decision making); - may be associated with difficulties in social interaction (e.g., difficulty in understanding social norms or the point of view of others); with various other conditions or disorders, diagnosed or undiagnosed; or with other exceptionalities;</li> <li>- is not the result of a lack of acuity in hearing and/or vision that has not been corrected; intellectual disabilities; socio-economic factors; cultural differences; lack of proficiency in the language of instruction; lack of motivation or effort; gaps in school attendance or inadequate opportunity to benefit from instruction.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Intellectual</b>          |  |
| Giftedness                   | <p>An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.</p>   |
| Mild Intellectual Disability | <p>A learning disorder characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and supportive service;</li> <li>b) an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development;</li> </ul>   |

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
|                           | c) a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.   |
| Developmental Disability  | A severe learning disorder characterized by:<br>a) an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development;<br>b) an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;<br>c) a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support. |
| <b>Physical</b>           |   |
| Physical Disability       | A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or development level.   |
| Blind and Low Vision      | A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely   |
| <b>Multiple</b>           |   |
| Multiple Exceptionalities | A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such a nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.   |

## Community Partners and Organizations

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <a href="#">Association for Bright Children - Ontario</a>        | <a href="#">Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder - Ontario Network of Expertise</a> |
| <a href="#">Autism Ontario</a>                                   | <a href="#">Home and Community Care Support Services</a>                       |
| <a href="#">Bethesda</a>   | <a href="#">Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara</a>                   |
| <a href="#">Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)</a> | <a href="#">Niagara Children's Centre</a>                                      |
| <a href="#">Child Parent Resource Institute (CPRI)</a>           | <a href="#">Niagara Support Services</a>                                       |
| <a href="#">Community Living Ontario</a>                         | <a href="#">Niagara Training and Employment Agency (NTEC)</a>                  |
| <a href="#">Contact Niagara</a>                                  | <a href="#">Pathstone Mental Health</a>  |
| <a href="#">Down Syndrome Niagara</a>                            | <a href="#">Voice for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children</a>                    |

## Ministry Provincial and Demonstration Schools

The Ministry of Education operates Provincial Schools and Provincial Demonstration Schools in the province of Ontario.

They exist to

- provide education for students who are deaf or blind, or who have severe learning disabilities.
- provide an alternative education option. • serve as regional resource centres for students who are deaf, blind, or deafblind.
- provide preschool home visiting services for students who are deaf or deafblind.
- develop and provide learning materials and media for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf-blind.
- provide school board teachers with resource services.
- play a valuable role in teacher training throughout the province.

| Provincial Demonstration Schools   | Schools for the Deaf  |
|--|---|
| <b>Sagonaska School</b><br>350 Dundas Street West, Belleville ON K8P 1B2<br>Phone: (613) 967-2830 Fax: (905) 967-2482  | <b>Sir James Whitney School</b><br>350 Dundas Street West, Belleville ON K8P 1B2<br>Phone and TTY: (613) 967-2823 Fax: (613) 967-2857           |
| <b>Amethyst School</b><br>1090 Highbury Avenue, London ON N5Y 4V9<br>Phone: (519) 453-4408 Fax: (519) 453-2160         | <b>Robarts School</b><br>1090 Highbury Avenue, PO Box 7360, Station E, London ON N5Y 4V9<br>Phone and TTY: (519) 453-4400 Fax: (519) 453-7943   |
| <b>Trillium School</b><br>347 Ontario Street South, Milton ON L9T 3X9<br>Phone: (905) 878-8428 Fax: (905) 878-7540     | <b>Ernest C. Drury School</b><br>255 Ontario Street South, Milton ON L9T 2M5<br>Phone: (905) 878-2851 Fax: (905) 878-1354                       |
| School for the Blind and Deaf-Blind  | Francophone School for the Deaf and Those with Learning Disabilities  |
| <b>W. Ross Macdonald School</b><br>350 Brant Avenue, Brantford ON N3T 3J9<br>Phone: (519) 759-0730 Fax: (519) 759-4741 | <b>Centre Jules-Léger 281</b><br>rue Lanark, Ottawa ON K1Z 6R8<br>Phone: (613) 761-9300 TTY: (613) 761-9302 and 761-9304<br>Fax: (613) 761-9301 |