



**Ministry of
Education**

Directions for Special Education in Ontario

September 2007

Ministry of Education Strategic Directions

Goals:

- High levels of student achievement: literacy and numeracy initiatives
- Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy
- Reduced gaps in student achievement
- Increased public confidence and support for public education

Goals for Special Education

- Improved outcomes for students receiving special education.
- Increased capacity of schools to effectively meet the needs of a variety of learners in settings ranging from regular to self-contained classrooms.
- Programming in the IEP that is linked to the Ontario Curriculum and the Provincial Report Card.
- More cooperative connections between schools and families of students facing learning challenges; promoting a positive environment.
- Improved balance between a focus on teaching and learning, and the need for appropriate process, documentation and accountability.

Demographics

- In 2005/06 school boards reported:
 - 13.72% of the total student population, or 290,725 students, were receiving special education programs and services.

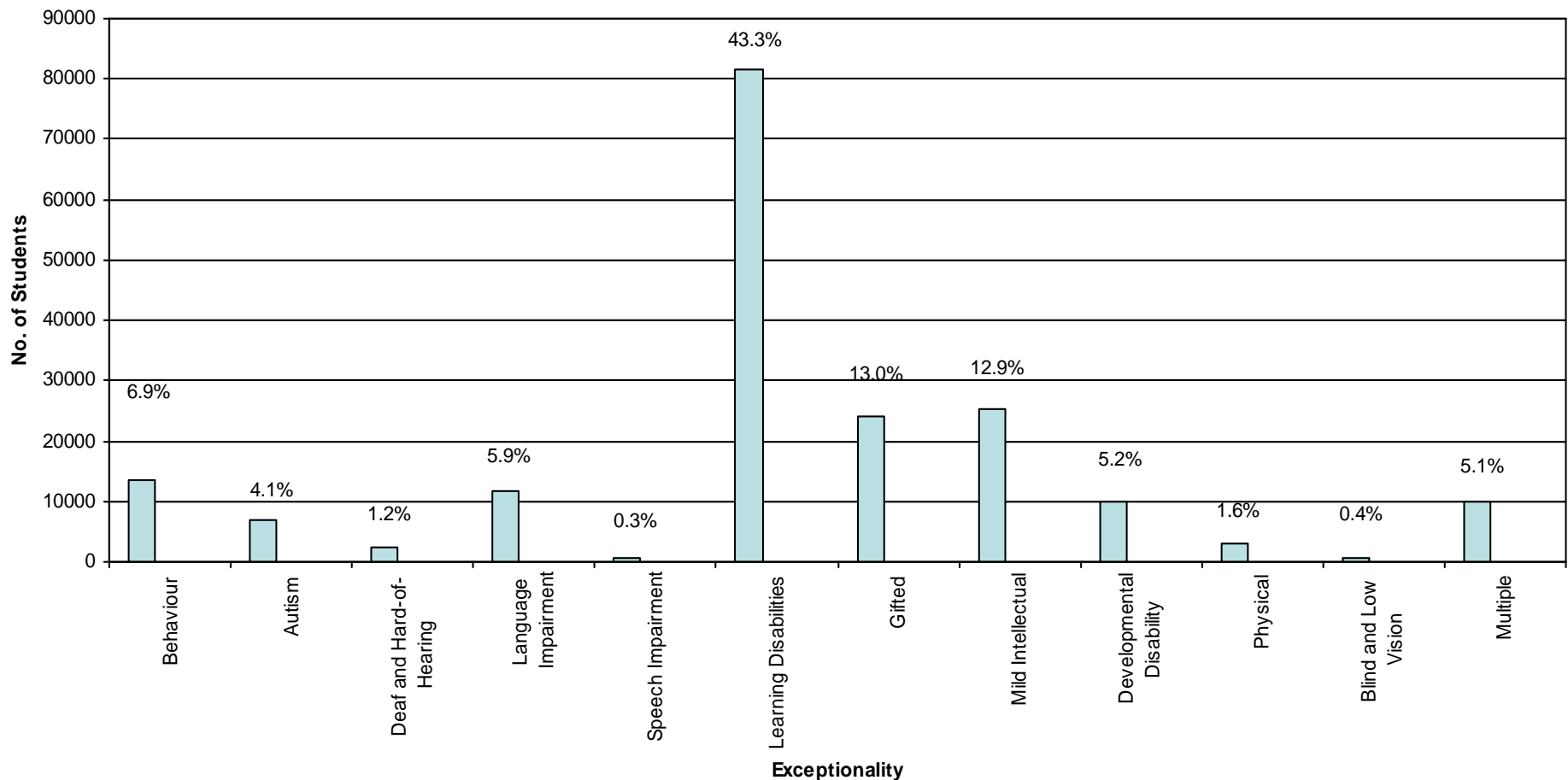
Students formally identified as "exceptional" by an IPRC			
	<i>Number of students</i>	<i>Percentage of panel</i>	<i>Percentage of all students</i>
<i>Elementary</i>	100,401	7.12%	4.74%
<i>Secondary</i>	91,501	12.93%	4.32%
Total	191,902		9.06%

Students NOT formally identified as "exceptional" by an IPRC			
	<i>Number of students</i>	<i>Percentage of panel</i>	<i>Percentage of all students</i>
<i>Elementary</i>	75,186	5.33%	3.55%
<i>Secondary</i>	23,637	3.34%	1.11%
Total	98,823		4.66%

- Approximately 82% of all students (86% secondary) receiving special education are placed in regular classrooms for more than half of the instructional day.
- The above figures do not include approximately 7,100 students attending *Educational Programs for Pupils In Government Approved Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional Facilities*. (Note: These students are not resident pupils of a school board or school authority.)

Demographics (cont'd)

In the 2005/06 school year, 191,902 students (91,501 secondary) were identified as “exceptional” by school board Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs)



Education for All: Expert Panel Report

- In May 2005, the Ministry released *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs (Kindergarten to Grade 6)*.
- The Report recommended practices, based on research, to improve instruction of reading, writing, oral communication, and mathematics to students from Kindergarten to Grade 6 who have special education needs. The Expert Panel took a non-exceptionality specific approach to address programming for students with special education needs.
- The report includes information on universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, professional learning communities, classroom and individual learner profiles and assistive technology.

Working Table on Special Education

- A Working Table on Special Education was established in 2005 to provide advice to the Minister of Education on reform to Special Education in Ontario.
- Co-chaired by Kathleen Wynne, MPP and then Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education, and Dr. Sheila Bennett of Brock University. The Working Table members represented a wide range of stakeholders, including: parents, students, educators, and other professionals.
- The final report, *Special Education Transformation: The Report of the Co-Chairs with the Recommendations of the Working Table on Special Education*, was submitted to the Minister of Education in May 2006.
- Recommendations in the report focussed on eight areas: student success and access to curriculum; professional development; identification and support options; service integration; parent collaboration; accountability and reporting; research; and special education funding.

Ministry Response to Working Table Recommendations

<i>ACTION</i>	<i>OBJECTIVES</i>
Streamlined IPRC Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Two Deputy Minister memoranda (October 12 and November 30, 2006) asking boards to examine their IPRC practices when both the board and parent agree that the student's placement will be in the regular classroom.
Reinforce Ministry's IEP Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Detailed individual reports provided feedback on the IEP packages that they submitted. As well a report on provincial trends was sent to all school boards on June 26, 2007. ➤ A Ministry web-based IEP template has been developed for voluntary use by boards.
Program and Financial Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pilots have been completed in two district school boards and the boards received a report that summarized the findings from the review of their board. ➤ Additional reviews have been conducted in three schools boards, including one French-language board, in June and the reports are being finalized.
Informal Dispute Resolution Guide Pilot Formal Dispute Resolution Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A resource guide for parents and educators on dispute resolution and mediation is being developed and is planned for release by end of September 2007. ➤ Training on the guide will be held regionally from October to November 2007; SEAC participation. ➤ Pilots on formal dispute resolution models will begin in selected school boards in the fall 2007.
School Board Special Education Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ During the 2007/08 school year the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and Student Success/Learning to 18 branches will work to align board improvement planning processes. ➤ During the 2008/09 school year the Ministry will work to align the special education plan with the revised LNS/Student Success/Learning to 18 plan, and will identify assessment and reporting measures of students with special education needs not accessing the provincial curriculum. ➤ The intent to have aligned board improvement plans in place for the 2009/10 school year. In the interim, special education plans will continue to be amended annually.

Targeted Investments

Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)

- \$25 million in 2005/06 and 2006/07 to deliver increased professional development to enhance teachers' capacity to improve outcomes for students with special education needs. The Ministry has provided \$3 million to CODE for 2007/08 projects. Boards will be expected to continue addressing the sustainability of new approaches to teaching and learning demonstrated through the projects.

Ontario Psychological Association (OPA)

- \$20 million in 2006/07 to work with school boards to reduce current waiting times for students who require assessments and to enhance the capacity of teachers to provide effective programs for students.
- The focus is on students in JK to Grade 4 who require differentiated learning experiences as a result of significant learning or behavioural needs. School boards are determining their students' assessment needs, which may include psychological, speech language, and social needs.
- The project completion date is scheduled for August 31, 2008.

Autism Spectrum Disorders Initiatives

- More than half of the 34 recommendations of the Ministers' Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Reference Group are being addressed by increasing the capacity of the education system to improve the learning environment for students with ASD leading to improved achievement and outcomes for students and stronger collaborative working relationships with parents, the school, and the community.
 - *Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 140* on incorporating methods of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) into programs for students with ASD.
 - Province-wide skills-based training on effective practices for working with students with autism and on ABA instructional methods for school board teams, school teams, principals, and teachers' assistants.
 - A comprehensive resource guide for teachers to support the delivery of effective educational practices for students with autism.
 - Models of collaborative service delivery for students with ASD.

Special Education Funding 2007/08

- A transition approach to the High Needs Amount (HNA) was introduced in 2007/08 to ensure that boards with enrolment increases will see an increase in HNA funding, while boards with declining enrolment will be held “stable” at 2006/07 funding levels.
- The 2007/08 Special Education Grant is projected to increase by \$79 million, to a provincial total of over \$2.07 billion.
- The 2007/08 total increase of \$79M to the Special Education Grant (SEG) includes:
 - A \$25M enhancement to provide stable funding levels for boards (High Needs Amount) and to support growth in the number of claims for the highest needs students
 - \$20 million to improve support for teachers’ assistants
 - A benchmark increase to the salary components of the SEG
- The Ministry remains committed to working with the sector on the development of measures for funding that reflect the variability of students with high needs among school boards.

2007 IEP Collaborative Review

Highlights of Common Findings

Template

- One third – capacity to be populated with required information
- Two thirds – sections missing; no logical sequence; extraneous/
redundant entries → *lack of clarity and readability*

Assessment Data

- Variable quality
- Some – limited to diagnosis
- Others – too detailed; too many entries
- Dated assessments
- Unnecessary inclusion of specific sub scores and percentile scores
- Notable lack of educational assessment data

Areas of Strength and Areas of Need

- Many areas of strength – appropriate
- Some – do not describe student as a learner; likes board games; supportive
- Some areas of need – appropriate
- Others – include accommodations; need for program or personnel
- Often too many entries

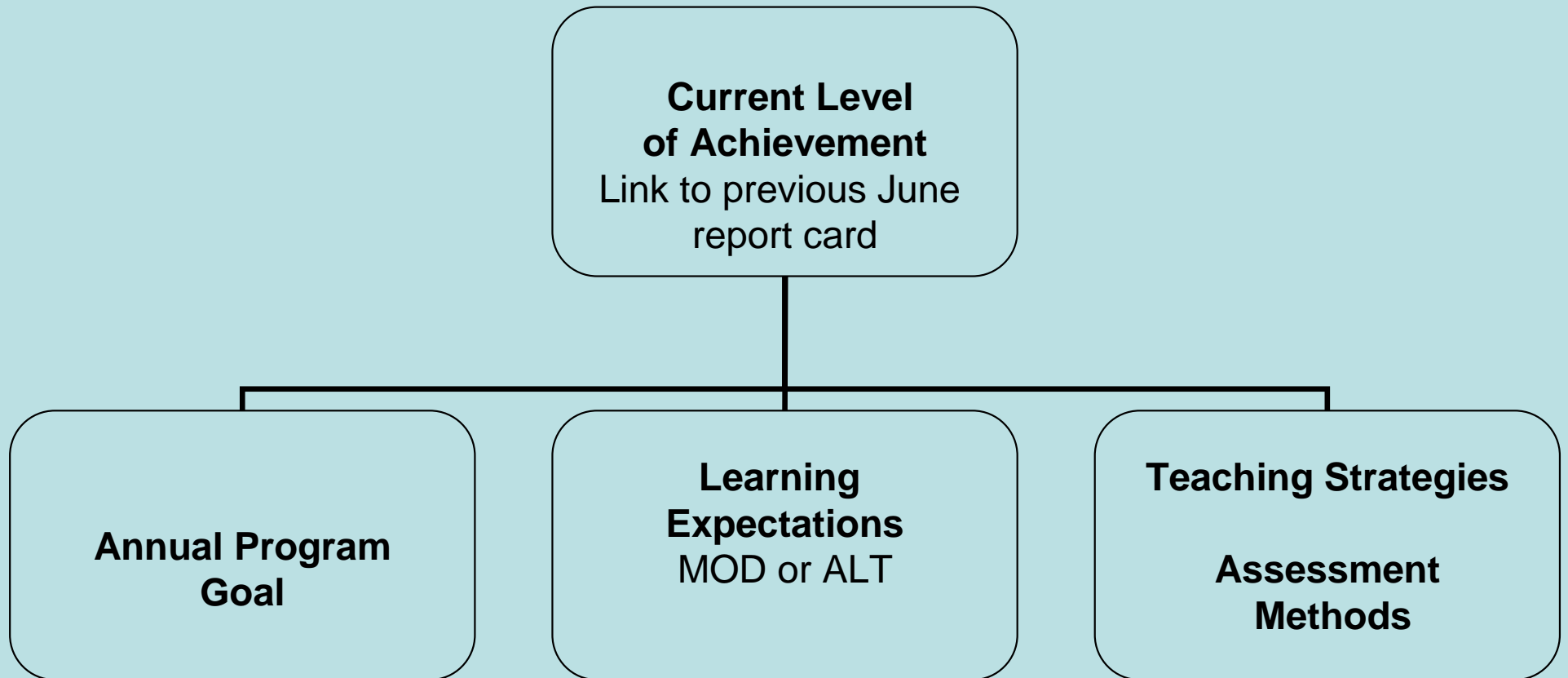
Accommodations

- Accommodations unique to individual student in some cases
- Others – generic; practice; praise
- Many – too numerous or redundant
- EQAO information not consistently provided
- Over 60% of secondary IEPs – accommodated only

Program Section

- Core of the IEP
- Link between the Ontario Curriculum and the Provincial Report Card
- Plan for student achievement → *accountability to parents*
- Classroom teacher is key

Program Section Components



Current Level of Achievement

- Modified subjects/courses – often omitted or incorrectly recorded
- Alternative skill areas – often omitted or too general to provide clear starting point

Learning Expectations

- Not measurable performance tasks
- Modified – often general statements from Ontario curriculum policy documents
- Alternative – often general statements
- Inconsistent evidence of revision by term and curriculum grade level/course
- Usually identified as area for improvement by boards

Teaching Strategies

- Evidence of good teaching practice, but not unique and, therefore, unnecessarily recorded
- Inconsistent alignment with each learning expectation

Assessment Methods

- Variety of assessment methods generally included
- Inconsistent alignment with each learning expectation
- Over-reliance on 'observation' without a checklist or rubric

Transition Plan

- Provided for most students, as required
- Few entries
- Generic
- Often address activities in secondary school instead of post-secondary activities
- Inconsistent evidence of collaboration
- Lack of evidence of detailed planning for students with significant challenges

Parent/Student Consultation

- Completed log not always provided
- Minimal entries; e.g., IEP sent home
- Parental feedback generally not recorded
- Lack of evidence of student involvement

Link to Provincial Report Card

- IEP box checked for modified subjects/courses
- Required statement included
- Comments on PRC not always related to learning expectations in IEP
- Some – excellent alternative reporting formats
- Others – no reporting of achievement in alternative skill areas
- IEP box sometimes inappropriately checked if ‘accommodated only’

Future Directions

- Ministry release of electronic IEP template and sample IEPs
- Ministry consultation to boards re findings of collaborative review
- Board capacity building for IEP developers within its own professional learning community

Useful Links

- Special Education Transformation Report (2006)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/speced/transformation/>
- Education for All: Expert Panel Report (2005)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/speced/panel/index.html>
- The Individual Education Plan: Resource Guide (2004)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/resource/iepresguid.pdf>
- Special Education Companion to the Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner
<http://www.ocup.org> (2002)
- Ontario Ministry of Education, Special Education
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/speced.html>
- Special Education Advisory Committee Information Program
<http://seac-learning.ca>