

# A PARENT'S GUIDE TO STUDENT SERVICES IN MISSION PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## **FOR PARENTS: STUDENT SERVICES in SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 75**

Mission is proud to be a diverse community and our schools reflect this diversity. All students should be actively engaged in their learning environments. Mission Public Schools is committed to providing the best supports possible for children. This is a quick guide to help parents understand their role in their child's education.

### **What do I do if I have a concern about my child's educational program? What if I think they may need support?**

STEP ONE: If you have a question or concern about your child's academic and/or social emotional well-being at school, you should talk to the Classroom Teacher. The Classroom Teacher may consult with the Learning Specialist Teacher and/or the Principal. This may, for example, initiate testing for specific needs your child may require.

STEP TWO: If after talking to the Classroom or Learning Specialist Teacher you still have a concern, then you should speak with the Principal or Vice-Principal. If you still have a concern after speaking with the Principal or Vice-Principal, then you should call the Director of Instruction, Student Services at 604-826-6286.

In the rare circumstance where your concerns have not been adequately addressed, Board of Education Policy Appeals Bylaw recognizes the right of a parent or student to appeal any decision of an employee of the Board which significantly affects the education, health or safety of the student.

Details of the appeal process may be found on the District website at:

<https://www.mpsd.ca/Board/Policies/Board%20Policy%20and%20Procedures/Policy%2013%20-%20Student%20Appeals%20Bylaw%204.pdf>

## **INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS (IEPs)**

### **What is the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and what can I expect?**

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a key document that outlines how the school and other community agencies (where appropriate) will support your child's learning needs. All students with a Ministry special needs designation have an IEP. The Learning Specialist Teacher who is case managing your child's educational program will invite you to an IEP meeting in the fall of each year to discuss the IEP.

The IEP is:

1. A concise plan for the student's education program
2. A tool to assist teachers in monitoring and communicating student growth.
3. Developed by school staff in consultation with parents, district staff, and external team members.
4. A living document, that can be flexible, and change to reflect the challenges and strengths of the student.
5. An ongoing record to ensure continuity in programming.

The IEP is not:

1. "Written in stone"

2. A daily plan.
3. Meant to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers.
4. A report card.

Your child will have a Learning Specialist teacher who will be the case manager for the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process. They will coordinate the development and implementation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and will involve parents in the planning of the IEP. In some instances, an Inclusive Support Teacher, Learning Specialist Alternate Teacher, Counsellor, school administrator, classroom teacher, or District Staff may also be the case manager.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting is the time for you to provide input into the goals, objectives, and accommodations for your child's IEP, as well as review and discuss your child's progress in relation to the goals and objectives IEP. The IEP is a working document and may contain the same goals and objectives from year-to-year with changes only to the strategies. An IEP is not a document that needs to be completely re-written each year but rather flows with the learning successes of your child. A parent may request a draft copy of an IEP.

In some cases, parents may wish to have private home-based specialists or therapists join the Individual Education Plan meetings. Parents may invite external team members, who are welcome to attend the IEP meetings.

An Individual Education Plan meeting is usually held in the fall with a review at least once during the year. In the rare situations where parent(s) do not agree with their child's IEP, they should talk to the Classroom Teacher(s) first. If after talking to the Classroom and Learning Specialist Teachers they still have a concern, then they should speak with the Principal or Vice-Principal. If there is still a concern after speaking with the Principal or Vice-Principal, then parents should call the Director of Instruction, Student Services at 604-826-6286.

If your child is newly identified as having special needs and this will be your first Individual Education Plan meeting, you may wish to ask the school to provide you with a draft of the IEP in advance of the meeting (if a draft IEP is available—in many cases the IEP is drafted at the IEP meeting with the parent(s)).

## **ADAPTATIONS and MODIFICATIONS**

### **What does it mean if my child has been provided with *adaptations*?**

A student working on curricular competencies at any grade or course level may be supported through the use of adaptations. Adaptations may include alternate formats for resources, instructional strategies and/or assessment procedures. Some examples of adaptations include:

1. different teaching strategies such as visual cues and/or breaking tasks into smaller parts;
2. different ways of demonstrating learning such as oral exams, visual representation and/or extra time
3. different formats for resources to enable students to receive information, such as Braille and/or text-to-speech software, and other assistive technologies

If your child is receiving adaptations, they may use alternate strategies that are essential to them for accessing the curricular competencies. When this is the case, the student will be:

1. assessed and will receive credit for the grade level course/subject they are working on;
2. and the report card will reflect their success at that grade/level.

Adaptations are described by the Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines: [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/ppandg.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/ppandg.htm)

### **What are the implications on graduation of my child receiving adaptations?**

Students receiving adaptations are working towards the same Dogwood Graduation Certificate as their peers. A Dogwood Graduation Certificate recognizes the successful completion of the BC curriculum and is recognized internationally. Most adaptations are considered universal supports, meaning that you do not need a psychological assessment to use them. If the adaptation is used in class, and documented through School Based Team, then the adaptation may be considered for adjudication on provincial assessments. All essential supports are the adaptations that are specific to your child for their success and should be documented in the IEP.

### **What does it mean if my child has a program that is “modified?”**

Modified programming is for students whose special needs are such that they are unable to access the learning standards of the curriculum, i.e.:

- students with limited awareness of their surroundings;
- students with fragile mental/physical health;
- students who are medically and cognitively challenged.

A student’s program cannot be modified without consultation with parents or guardians.

### **What are the implications on graduation of my child’s program being “modified?”**

If your child is on an exclusively modified program, they will not be eligible for the standard Dogwood Graduation Certificate. Instead they will receive an Evergreen School Completion Certificate that recognizes their accomplishments in attaining their Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals.

The provision of adaptations acknowledges that some students may need extra time to graduate. A modified program is described by the Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines as one where:

“Instructional and assessment-related decisions are made to address a student’s educational needs that consist of individualized learning goals as opposed to provincial learning outcomes”.

If your child is on a modified program, they are assessed in relation to the goals and objectives established in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Some students spend an extra year in public school to complete the goals in their IEP. Some students are on a partially modified program (e.g., students with physical disabilities who cannot take Physical Education). If your child is on a partly modified program, it may still be possible for them to receive a Dogwood Graduation Certificate. Please talk to your child’s Middle School Counsellor for more information. In many cases, the decision to modify need not be made until then end of Grade 9.

### **COMMUNICATION with the SCHOOL**

### **If I have a question or a concern, who is my first point of contact at the school?**

If you have a question or concern about your child's educational program, you should talk to the Classroom Teacher. The Classroom Teacher may consult with the Learning Specialist Teacher and/or the School-Based Team. In the rare situation that you find that your questions or concerns have not been addressed by the Classroom or Learning Specialist Teacher, your next point of contact is the school Principal or Vice Principal.

### **How do I know what accommodations and services are provided to my child? Are they supported in the class, or outside the class, or a combination of both?**

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting is the best time to ensure that you fully understand the accommodations and services being provided to your child. The IEP is the document that outlines all of this. Don't be afraid to come with a list of questions to the IEP meeting. We encourage you to write them down and refer to the list at the meeting. Of course, if you have any questions that arise outside of the IEP meeting, you should contact your child's Classroom Teacher(s). As noted, they are your first point of contact for matters related to your child's educational program.

### **How does the school communicate to staff about my child's special needs?**

It is important that the teachers working with your child understand:

- The nature of their special needs;
- Their strengths and stretches; and,
- The goals, objectives and accommodation as outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP)

The Learning Specialist Teacher who case manages your child's educational program shares this information with the teachers and any support staff who work with your child. This information sharing is done respecting student privacy and confidentiality.

### **Is the documentation on my child kept confidential?**

Yes. All confidential documents (e.g., medical diagnosis, formal assessment results, the IEP and related documents) are placed in a specialized file that is part of the student's regular file (referred to as a 'G4'). This file is kept in a secure location. Parents may ask for access to any of these documents in the G4.

If a student moves to a new school within our school district, the entire student file, including the specialized file, is sent directly to the new school to promote continuity of service. **If a student moves to a public school in another district, the last two years of report cards, the IEP, and other pertinent information is transferred to the new school.**

Parent consent is required for the entire student file to be sent to the new school. While student documentation cannot be removed from a student's file, a parent may request that specific student information be placed in a sealed envelope within the student's file.

## **SECTION E: ASSESSMENT**

### **What is curriculum-based assessment?**

Curriculum-based assessment occurs in the classroom to identify areas of student strength and/or weaknesses. If a teacher has concerns about the level of achievement and/or rate of skill acquisition, they may make a referral to the Learning Specialist Teacher, and the parent will be notified.

The LST will offer additional strategies and accommodations for use in the classroom. Where there is a need for further information, they may refer your child for specialized assessment at the school or district level. Level A and Level B school-based formal assessments are called “standardized” because the administration process is consistent and the resulting scores are compared to other representative students the same age called the “norm group.” All Classroom and Learning Specialist Teachers are qualified to administer and interpret Level A assessments. Level B assessment requires that certified teachers, including Learning Specialist Teachers, demonstrate completion of specialized university coursework and/or in- service training from qualified personnel.

Level C assessment is administered by the District School Psychologists to determine your child’s ability in various domains, such as: Verbal comprehension; Perceptual reasoning; Working memory; and, Processing speed.

### **What is the process for getting my child formally assessed by the school?**

It is the Learning Specialist Teacher in consultation with school Psychologist that initiates the referral for formal assessment based on the child’s performance in school. If, as a parent, you have concerns and believe that formal assessment should be considered, the first step in getting your child assessed would be to contact the Classroom Teacher who may then bring your child forward to the School-Based Team for problem-solving and possible school-based assessment.

### **When is re-assessment appropriate for my child?**

- If the Classroom Teacher sees a significant change in your child’s achievement or ability, then a referral to the School-Based Team will be made and the re- assessment process will be considered.
- Level C re-assessment may be done to determine a suspected change in the learning over the course of time in school, such as comparing elementary school results with that of high school.
- Formal Level C assessments or re-assessment are done to determine qualification for Community Living BC (CLBC) services. CLBC offers services to qualified students when they turn 19 years of age. Consult with CLBC for more information.

### **Will the school accept formal assessments done privately?**

Yes, as long as the formal assessment is complete, and the report meets the guidelines and criteria of the Ministry of Education for a designation in one of the special education categories. The school district makes the final determination that the student is to be designated as a child with special needs.

Together, Levels A, B, and C assessments make up a complete Psycho-educational assessment. Not all students require a complete Psycho-educational assessment for their school programming. For some students, Level A and/or Level B assessment provides adequate information for student programming.

### **What do I do if my perception differs from the school in terms of my child’s need for a special needs designation or supplemental services?**

If you wish to seek out a diagnosis or formal assessment to ascertain any identifiable special needs, the school and district would be able to support and assist you through the process. We understand that this is totally new to you so we are there to help.

During the time it takes to seek out a diagnosis or administer formal assessments, the school may begin providing supports for your child. Providing support to students, including the provision of adaptations, does not require a diagnosis or designation. It is always our goal to work with parents in the best interests of our students. Please let us know right away if you have any concerns so we may work together to address them. We want to keep the lines of communication open and we value our relationship with you. There may also be situations where parents disagree that their child has special needs. In cases such as these, parents may decide to refuse the services for their child.

Occasionally the school-based team may determine that a student with a diagnosed special need may not require an IEP. The Ministry recognizes such cases, as long as:

- the student requires no adaptation or only minor adaptations to educational materials, or instructional or assessment methods;
- the student is not on a modified program; and
- the student requires in a school year, 25 hours or less remedial instruction, by a person other than the classroom teacher in order for the student to meet the expected learning outcomes.

In some situations, parents may have concerns about their child's progress and a specific diagnosis has not been obtained. The Principal is available to discuss learning assistance opportunities for your child.

### **Can I bring a support person to a meeting?**

Yes. We want parents to feel comfortable and have their voice heard at meetings with school and district staff. Support persons may include a Supported Child Development consultant; private therapist(s); a Siwal Si'wes elder; a District Parents' Advisory Council member; family member, etc.

## **KEY STAFF**

### **What is the role of the Learning Specialist Teacher?**

The Learning Specialist Teacher is the person who understands your child's strengths and stretches and, working with you, the Classroom Teacher(s) and the School-Based Team, how to best support your child.

### **What is the role of the Inclusive Support Program (ISP) Teacher?**

The ISP teacher is the case manager for students with a low incidence designation. The ISP teacher coordinates the writing, review, and monitoring of these IEPs. The ISP teacher may provide direct or indirect service to meet educational, behavioural, and social goals, including providing colleagues with specific strategies and interventions relating to behaviour and social skills development to be successful in an integrated setting.

### **What is the role of Educational Assistant (EA)?**

EAs work under the direction of the Classroom or Learning Specialist Teacher to:

1. implement the learning accommodations and strategies developed by the Classroom and Learning Specialist Teachers (outlined in the Individual Education Plan);
2. prepare materials for specific children, where appropriate, such as picture exchange communication systems or countdown strips; and,
3. document a child's strengths, achievements and needs for review as part of the IEP planning process

While the Educational Assistant is a very important member of your child's school team, if you have any questions about your child's educational program, you should talk directly to the Classroom Teacher(s). They may then consult with the Learning Specialist Teacher and School- Based Team.

Where an Educational Assistant (EA) is involved in your child's daily program, it is best for parents to address any concerns with the teacher(s). The Classroom Teacher(s) are ultimately responsible for the educational programming of your child so it is vitally important that they know directly from you what questions or concerns that you may have. Depending on the level of need of your child, the Learning Specialist Teacher may be more "front line" with your child's educational program and therefore could be a good first contact. This can be discussed with your child's school team.

#### **How are Educational Assistants (EAs) assigned?**

Educational assistants are not formally assigned to individual students. They are assigned to schools based on overall student need. Twice a year (September and February), the Director of Instruction, Student Services conducts the "1701 Review" process, and this is also a time when the district affirms that students meet the Ministry of Education criteria for a special needs designation.

EA staffing is a part of the Spring staffing process for all schools in the District. At these three times during the school year, the total Educational Assistant allocation is discussed with school and District staff in an effort to ensure that students with special needs can access an educational program.

Following the Spring staffing process, opportunities are provided for staff in May and June to discuss preliminary class cluster groupings for the coming school year. The Principal makes the final decision in the deployment of the EA allocation provided to them.

#### **How am I informed when there is going to be a change of Educational Assistant (EA) for my child?**

Your child's Principal is likely to be the one to inform you of any change of Educational Assistant for your child. While we do our best to prevent changes of Educational Assistants during the school year, sometimes it is inevitable as staff go on leaves for various reasons. The District supports teams of EAs supporting individual students to foster reduced dependency on one staff member and tolerance for change.

It also happens that there may be a change to your child's Educational Assistant on any given day because of illness. For students with complex special needs, schools try to ensure that there is a "back-up" Educational Assistant who knows your child's program in the event of the illness of the "regular" Educational Assistant. This is to maximize consistency in your child's educational program. There are also "Educational Assistant Files" in the schools that highlight the key features of your child's IEP for the replacement Educational Assistant. When there is a more permanent change of Educational Assistant



(due to a leave or resignation), the position is filled according to qualifications and seniority in accordance with the collective agreement with the union.

### **What are the roles of Student Services Team (SST)?**

The SST is made up of highly specialized staff members. These district staff members travel from school to school throughout the district to consult with school staff and provide direct or indirect service to students. SST members are available to consult with Learning Specialist and Classroom Teachers in the development of IEP goals, objectives and accommodations for your child. In some cases, SST staff may offer direct services to your child within their area of expertise, such as Behaviour Support, Speech & Language, Hearing or Vision.

### **What role can my private home-based specialist, therapist, or other external parties play?**

Although home and school environments may differ significantly, whenever there is home and school program consistency, there is increased opportunity for the child's success. Therefore, private home-based specialists or therapists are welcome to join you at school meetings.

In some situations, you may wish to have your private home-based specialist or therapist observe your child at school in order to have a full picture of his/her level of functioning across environments. If this is the case, please contact your child's Principal. This is a safeguard to ensure that the Principal and District are aware of the purpose and role of external agencies in our schools. In some cases, the agency may already have District approval if they are known to us and work in our school on a regular basis.

## **SERVICE DELIVERY**

### **What is a 'Ministry designation'?**

There are specific Ministry criteria and documentation requirements for a student to be designated as a student with special needs. For example, a student might be referred to as a 'Level 2 Category D (Chronic Health)'. Many, but not all, of these designations have additional funds that help the District provide support for students. The specific requirements are outlined in Special Education Services: Category Checklists – 2010 and can be found on the Ministry of Education website. Please refer to this Ministry website for specific descriptions of each category as well as examples of diagnoses. Two commonly coined terms are 'High Incidence' and 'Low Incidence' – these refer to the frequency at which certain designations are found in the general population. Broadly speaking, Low Incidence classifications have more substantial costs associated with providing services to them.

### **What supplemental services are the funds used for?**

Specialized supplemental services may include one or more of the following:

- Educational Assistants
- Learning Resources
- Student Services Staff (e.g., Teacher of the Hearing Impaired, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, District inclusive Mentor Teachers, District Psychologists, District Occupational or Physiotherapists, Children in Care Advocate, Inclusive Child Support Worker, etc.)

The level of individual student need is always the focus of discussion when allocating supplemental services. For example, while two students may be similar in that they both meet the criteria for Category G (Autism Spectrum Disorder), their needs may be markedly different. One student may be on the high functioning end of the spectrum while the other may be lower functioning and will therefore require a higher level of support. The precise programming offered through these supplemental services varies depending on the educational needs of the student. Some students may receive support within the classroom; others may receive some services outside the classroom in one-on-one or small group settings. Sometimes indirect service and resources are provided to the Classroom Teacher with no direct service to the student. The IEP will outline the settings used in your child's educational program.

### **What is an 'ISP' or 'Sensory Room and calming spaces'?**

The Mission Public School District is committed to providing students with educational programs in an inclusive setting. Inclusion does not mean all students remain in the traditional classroom setting 100% of the time. For many students, individual or small group pull out is an integral part of a student's individualized educational program. There may also be instances where, in addition to Resource room settings, the individual needs of some students require that be provided with an alternate space.

The purpose of the use of these spaces is to:

1. Decrease sensory input if a student is feeling overwhelmed;
2. Support student self-regulation;
3. Provide a quiet work space to complete tasks and work on IEP goals;
4. Provide a space for individual sensory, occupational therapy and/or physiotherapy programming.

Students using sensory rooms and calming spaces are:

1. Always supervised by a staff member (often working side by side or in close proximity and in visual range)
2. Never locked in a room alone or prevented from leaving

### **What is the District policy on Physical Restraint and Seclusion?**

The Mission School District has a specific Administrative Procedure regarding the use of physical restraint and seclusion. Please refer directly to:

<https://www.mpsd.ca/Board/Policies/Board%20Policy%20and%20Procedures/Policy%20180%20-%20Physical%20Restraint%20and%20Seclusion.pdf>

## **TRANSITIONS**

### **What is the process for transitioning my child to Kindergarten?**

Please click [here](#) for information on Mission Public School's Kindergarten Registration Procedure.

If your child has Special Needs, please remember to bring all documents (ie. assessment reports, support plans, consultation records) to your catchment elementary school when registering.

Here is some additional information for parents:

 [K Transition Info for Parents](#)

 [Speech and Language - Kindergarten Information](#)

Parents are also encouraged to attend “Welcome to Kindergarten” events in the school that are held each spring for all children attending kindergarten in the fall. Please ask your child’s school when this event will take place when you register your child for school. Parents of in-coming Kindergarten students are encouraged to register their child as soon as registration opens in mid-January.

Some parents receive funding directly for their child to support their care before entering the school system. This funding is reduced once the child enters the school system.

### **What is the process for transitioning my child from this year’s classroom to next year’s classroom in the school?**

Each spring, schools begin looking at their projected enrolment for the following September. Before the end of the school year, plans are already underway for the placement of students with special needs in classrooms. The exact placement is finalized the first week of school in September.

### **What is the process for transitioning my child to a new school in the district?**

Transition planning involves your child’s Learning Specialist Teacher connecting with the receiving school’s Learning Specialist Teacher to share the IEP and the specific learning needs of your child. Arrangements are often made for your child to visit the receiving school in the spring and to meet the new Learning Specialist Teacher, Principal, and other staff. As with all transition planning, staff work closely to determine which classroom will best suit the learning needs of your child the following school year. The receiving school’s Learning Specialist Teacher will invite you to an IEP meeting as early as possible in the fall to meet and consult with you on your child’s educational program.

### **What happens if my child is going to a new school outside of Mission?**

If your child is going to a new school outside our district, our staff work cooperatively with the new school (provided you have given the school your permission to release information about your child) to provide the information needed to plan a smooth transition.

### **What is the process for transitioning my child from high school to the community?**

Transitioning your special needs child into adulthood requires coordination and planning. It is important that parents prepare for this transition well before the child turns 19 years of age. There are arrangements that need to be made with Community Living BC (CLBC) and others to ensure that a smooth transition takes place. It is recommended by the Ministry of Education that this planning begin when your child turns 16 years of age. School staff can assist with your child’s transition. The Ministry of Children and Family Development has two documents that may assist parent in the planning process:

Your Future Now: A Transition Planning and Resource Guide for Youth with Special Needs and Their Families [http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/support\\_guide.pdf](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/support_guide.pdf)

Cross-Ministry Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Special Needs  
[http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/children-teens-with-specialneeds/2012\\_ytpp\\_protocol.pdf](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/children-teens-with-specialneeds/2012_ytpp_protocol.pdf)