

GUIDE TO THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN

UPDATED 2020

At the heart of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the relationship between a student and their classroom teacher, and the understanding that the potential of each student can and should be reached. A profound respect for the dignity of every student and their family, as members of our school and church communities, should guide all deliberations about the IEP.

As teachers have evolved in their use of research-based practices, such as Differentiated Instruction (DI) and assessment, many needs of students who learn differently are being addressed successfully within the classroom program, thus reducing the scope of accommodations and modifications required in an IEP. Many principles of DI and other practices—including, for example, Universal Design for Learning (UDL)—enable some students with special needs to access the curriculum successfully.

Differentiated Instruction (DI) is based on the idea that because students differ significantly in terms of their strengths, interests, learning styles, and readiness to learn, it is necessary to adapt instruction to suit these differing characteristics. One or a number of the following elements can be differentiated in any classroom learning situation:

- The content of learning (what students are going to learn, and when).
- The process of learning (types of tasks and activities).
- The products of learning (ways in which students demonstrate learning).
- The affect/environment of learning (context and environment within which students learn and demonstrate learning).

“A differentiated approach, driven by an understanding of the student, is thought to contribute to high levels of both achievement and engagement in learning” (*Learning for All*, 2013, p. 17).

NOTE: The use of DI and assessment and other research-based practices does not negate the requirement to have IEPs for students identified as exceptional, or those who are unable to successfully access the grade/subject-level curriculum. Use of these practices would certainly reduce what needs to be included in a student’s IEP.

WHAT WE KNOW FOR SURE

The IEP:

- Is a plan, containing a representative sample of the student’s program that evolves throughout the year.
- Describes the special education program and/or services required by a student, based on assessment of the student’s strengths, achievements, previous goals, and needs, as well as ongoing consultations with the student and parents.
- Serves as a common reference point for the student, their parents, and everyone who has responsibilities for helping the student meet the goals and expectations under the plan.
- Is the key link to assessment, evaluation and reporting, especially reporting on the provincial report card.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

The IEP Standards (2000) themselves have not been updated since the creation of the first OECTA Guide to the Individual Education Plan (2008). Individual school boards have a standardized template that meets the required standards, provided the IEP team completes it within the required timelines. However, a few changes and clarifications are necessary, with the advent of:

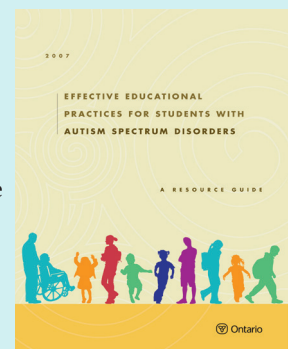
1. Policy Program Memorandum (PPM) 140
2. Policy Program Memorandum (PPM) 156
3. Ministry documents, including:
 - *Growing Success (2010) and The Growing Success Kindergarten Addendum (2016)*
 - *Learning for All – A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2013)*
 - *Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide (2017)*

PPM 140 Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

This PPM outlines that principals are required to ensure that ABA methods are incorporated into IEPs for students with ASD, where appropriate. School boards have undertaken significant teacher training pertaining to ABA methods. School boards also have designated and trained ABA specialists, though these are most likely not teachers. Speak to your principal if you have a student with ASD, but have not had training in ABA methods.

Given the wide range of needs within the autism spectrum, ABA methodology would most likely be appropriate for the alternative areas of a student’s IEP. For example, areas such as behavioural, self-management, social, and communication skills. When an alternative program is determined to be appropriate for a particular student with an ASD, it should, wherever possible, incorporate methods of ABA, and be provided in conjunction with a program that includes accommodations as well as modified learning expectations, as necessary.

The incidence of autism has increased significantly. You are encouraged to explore the Ministry resource *Effective Educational Practices for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (2007)* to assist you in meeting the needs of students in your course who are on the autism spectrum. While the entire resource guide is worthwhile, look for the “Tips for Teachers” and “Tools & Techniques” symbols as a guide to the most useful features in the document. The guide also contains pertinent information on ABA.



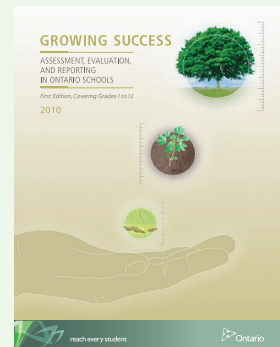
PPM 156 Supporting transitions for students with special education needs

This PPM changes the IEP standard pertaining to transition planning. The standard initially required that transition plans were developed for students aged 14 years and older, but this is no longer the case. Transition plans are now required in all IEPs for students with special education needs, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Transitions would include situations such as changing schools, grades, or semesters, or moving from secondary to post-secondary, or to a workplace.

GROWING SUCCESS

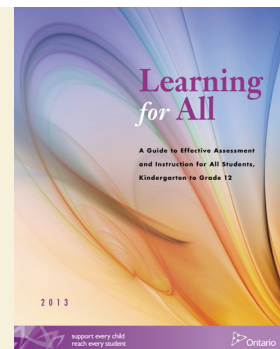
Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools (2010) outlines specifically what is required when reporting to parents about student achievement, including students with an IEP. Consult the document for the information pertaining to reporting student achievement tied to accommodations, a student's achievement in a modified subject area, achievement in alternative program areas, and more. Specific direction and phrasing are provided for teachers to utilize when communicating achievement to parents.

Growing Success also entrenched the requirement to update an IEP after each reporting period, including progress reports, in the fall. **This requirement has changed in elementary schools!** In June 2017, the Ministry of Education released a memo to Directors of Education that removed the requirement to update the IEP after the fall progress report. According to the memo, the IEP created in the first 30 instructional days of the school year “will serve as the required reviewing and updating of the first reporting period for the elementary progress report.”



LEARNING FOR ALL

Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, K-12 (2013) is a key resource that builds on the *Guiding Principles of Education for All*, which were shared in the first version of OECTA's IEP Guide. *Learning for All* provides a plethora of information and insight for teachers about Assessment for Learning, Universal Design, Differentiated Instruction, and a Tiered Approach to support all students' learning, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.



SPECIAL EDUCATION IN ONTARIO, K-12

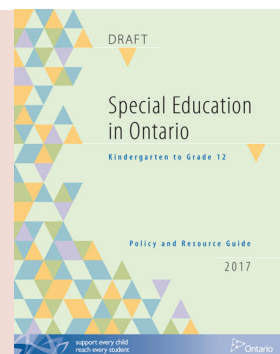
Special Education in Ontario, K-12: Policy and Resource Guide (2017) supports teachers in the implementation of effective programs for students with special education needs. It includes many hyperlinks to reference documents to assist you in meeting the needs of students with an IEP. Consider accessing this resource whenever you are dealing with students with special needs, their parents, community agencies, etc., as you will find all you need linked within the guide. Several sections are not pertinent to teachers. You are encouraged to access these two sections, which are most relevant:

- **Section C** (Early Identification, Assessment and Transition Planning)
- **Section E** (The Individual Education Plan)

The guide supersedes the 2001 version of the document, as well as the following Ministry documents:

- *Standards for School Boards' Special Education Plans* (2000)
- *Individual Education Plans: Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation* (2000)
- *Transition Planning: A Resource Guide* (2002)
- *The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide* (2004)

Note that while this document supersedes the two standards documents, the standards described in both documents remain unchanged.



TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- The IEP is a working document developed by a school team, the parents, and the student when they are 16 years of age, and older. Community Service Providers may also be involved.
- An IEP is a representative sample of the student’s program that informs reporting to parents, rather than outlining every component of a student’s program.
- Accommodations are what you do for the student and are only listed in the IEP if they are provided solely to that student. Accommodations can be provided in three areas: Instructional, Environmental and Assessment. Any accommodations listed in the IEP must be provided by every teacher who teaches the student, unless the accommodation specifically states otherwise.
- Modifications are what you do to the curriculum. Modifications either increase or decrease the complexity of curriculum expectations of the current grade/course level, or come from a different grade/course level.
- Alternative expectations do not exist in Ministry curricula.
- Goals are generally set for the semester/year, while expectations are set for the term (i.e. the reporting period).
- At the elementary level, if a subject has strands (e.g. mathematics), two or three expectations per strand/term is sufficient.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- EduGAINS: Access the resource *Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12*, as well as sample IEPs for various exceptionalities, at: www.edugains.ca
- *Effective Educational Practices for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Resource Guide* (2007). Access at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsecspced/autismspecdis.pdf>
- “Teachers’ Gateway to Special Education.” This website provides information and support pertaining to students with special learning needs, including key practices, teaching strategies, and more, at: <https://www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning/teachers-gateway-to-special-education/>

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