

Considerations for program planning

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Roles and Responsibilities

Students

Students' responsibilities with respect to their own learning develop gradually and increase over time as they mature and progress through elementary and secondary school. With experience and support, including culturally responsive and relevant instruction, students can:

- look for and act on new ideas and opportunities for learning, communicating with teachers and peers, expressing their voice, and developing their agency to become lifelong learners;
- reflect on their learning, then receive, provide, and respond to meaningful feedback, and set their own goals;
- take responsibility and organize themselves so that they can engage in learning both collaboratively with peers and independently.

Students may experience a variety of circumstances that can make school challenging. The attention, patience, and encouragement shown by teachers can be extremely important in supporting all students in their learning and progress.

Students with special education needs must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). An IEP is a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the strengths and needs that affect the student's ability to learn and to demonstrate

learning. It is expected (and required, if the student is sixteen years of age or older) that secondary students will be given the opportunity to provide input in the development of the IEP. However, any student for whom an IEP is being developed should be consulted to the degree possible.

Parents

Parents^[*] play a vital role in education. Studies show that students perform better in school if their parents are involved in their education. Schools offer a variety of parent engagement opportunities, such as providing parents with information about how to support their children's learning at home and at school.

Throughout the Ontario curriculum, students are provided with opportunities for hands-on, experiential learning. To ensure students' health and safety as they learn, parents should inform teachers of any medical conditions that their children have, including allergies, and they should also encourage and remind their children to go to school prepared to participate safely in all activities.

Parents of students with special education needs have an important role to play in the promotion of their child's success at school. This includes participating in the Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC) process, (if their child is being considered for an IPRC), parent-teacher conferences, and other relevant school activities, as well as participating in the development of their child's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Further information on the role of parents in their children's education can be found in the following ministry documents [A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010](#) [↗](#), [The Ontario Curriculum Review and Revision Guide](#), and other [parent resources](#).

Teachers

Teachers are critical to the success of students. Teachers are responsible for planning and implementing learning and assessment activities that use appropriate, high-impact instructional strategies, including culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, to support students in achieving the curriculum expectations. Teachers are responsible for understanding and addressing individual students' needs, strengths, and interests, and for ensuring equitable

learning opportunities for every student, including through the use of varied teaching, assessment, and evaluation strategies and approaches.

Teachers provide numerous hands-on opportunities for students to develop and refine their knowledge and skills. The learning activities they design should be relevant and authentic for all students, so that students can apply their learning to life beyond the school. Equitable opportunities to relate lived experiences, knowledge, and skills to wider contexts motivate students to learn in meaningful ways and to become lifelong learners.

To increase their comfort level and skill, and to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum, teachers should reflect on their own attitudes, biases, and values with respect to the topics they are teaching and seek out current resources, mentors, and professional development and training opportunities, as appropriate.

Teachers are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of every student and for encouraging and motivating students to be mindful of their own health and safety and that of others.

As part of effective teaching practice, teachers communicate with parents throughout the school year, using various methods that may be either formal or informal, to meet the diverse needs of families. Teachers discuss with parents what their children are learning at school, and work to better understand students' experiences outside of school. Ongoing reciprocal communication enables parents to work in partnership with the school, leading to stronger connections between the home and school that foster and support equitable student learning and achievement.

Teachers also have an important role in the success of students with special education needs, including reviewing and updating the IEP as well as implementing effective programs and/or services for students with special education needs.

Principals

The principal works in partnership with teachers and parents to ensure that all students have equitable access to the best possible educational experience. The principal is also a community builder who creates an environment that is welcoming to all, and who ensures that every member of the school community is kept well informed. To support student learning, principals ensure that the

Ontario curriculum is being effectively implemented in every classroom using a variety of instructional approaches, and that appropriate resources are made available for teachers and students. To enhance teaching and student learning in all subjects, principals promote professional learning and work with staff to facilitate professional development activities that deepen teachers' knowledge of the curriculum.

Principals ensure the development, implementation, and review of a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP); ensure that parents are consulted in the development of their child's IEP and that they are provided with a copy of the IEP; and ensure that the program is delivered as set out in the IEP.

Community Partners

Community partners are an important resource for schools and students, modelling how the knowledge and skills acquired through the curriculum relate to life beyond the school. As mentors supporting students' experiential learning, community partners can enrich their educational experience, as well as the life of the community.

Community groups can support educators in recruiting practising experts to provide in-class, virtual, or off-site learning experiences for students on topics, concepts, and skills in the curriculum. Schools and school boards can coordinate efforts with community partners and can involve community volunteers in supporting instruction and school and community engagement events held at the school (such as parent engagement nights, art and talent shows, athletic and other extra-curricular activities, science fairs, and technological skills competitions). School boards can collaborate with leaders of community programs, including programs offered through community centres, conservation authorities, libraries, cultural centres, youth-led organizations, and museums.

Community partners are especially relevant for students with special education needs as they frequently bring knowledge and experience from outside the school day and experience. They can support parents and share information and observations about the student's behaviour and learning in a variety of settings and help the school team to develop a common understanding of the student's strengths and needs as they affect the student's ability to learn and demonstrate learning. In addition, members of a cultural community may hold important knowledge and skills related to culturally responsive and relevant teaching and

learning. Educators are encouraged to consult with the members of their diverse community to ensure that material and content are culturally responsive and relevant. As an example, schools can contact their board's Indigenous education lead to learn more about representation from various local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit community groups and service delivery organizations in their learning programs.