Special Needs Policy

St. Thomas High School

• Introduction

The St. Thomas High School Special Needs Policy has been developed within a framework established in numerous official documents:

• *Education Act* developed by the Quebec Government in 1998. This document stipulates that each student has the right to special education services “.. within the scope of the programs offered by the school board.” (1998)

• *The Policy on Special Education* developed by the Quebec Government in 2000. This policy recognizes the importance of prevention and early intervention. It emphasizes that education support for student learning must be based on an individualized evaluation of student needs and abilities, and should be offered in the most natural environment possible. The policy favors integration into regular classes whenever possible.

• *The Quebec Education Programme* developed by the Quebec Government in 2006. The QEP outlines the programme of studies to be followed by students in Quebec. It emphasizes that students learn best when curriculum is differentiated to allow for previous learning, and individual cognitive styles and interests.

• *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning :Evaluation for Better Learning* developed by the Quebec Government (2006). This document emphasizes two types of values that should underlie evaluation practices in any school: fundamental values such as justice, equality, and equity and instrumental values such as coherence, rigor, and openness.
• **Special Education Needs within the International Baccalaureate Programmes.** This document emphasizes that the International Baccalaureate Organization, similarly to the Quebec Government and the Lester B Pearson School Board, supports the principles of inclusive education.

• **Identification of Students with Special Needs**

  “At Risk”

  • Students identified as “at risk” are those with learning difficulties (LD), behavioral difficulties (BD) or mild intellectual delay (MI). The school adheres to the definition for each of these terms as outlined by MELS. (LBPSB,1998)

  • The process of identification for “at risk” students is done at the school level through the school’s Resource/ Ad Hoc Team. Parents are kept informed at all stages of this identification process. (LBPSB,1998)

  • An “at risk” designation will only be considered if student difficulties persist in spite of preventive strategies and interventions that have been tried prior to any referral to the Resource/ Ad Hoc Team.

  • An individualized Education Plan will be developed in consultation with the parents/guardian and with the student, should a child be deemed “at risk”. (LBPSB,1998)

“Handicapped”

• Students identified as “handicapped” are those who meet the definition for disability as outlined by MELS. (LBPSB, 1998). Such disabilities could include motor impairment, organic impairment, pervasive developmental disorder, psychopathological disorder, visual impairment, hearing impairments, but are not limited to this list.

  • If the student has not already been identified as handicapped at the time of registration, the process for identification would be done at the school level through the school’s Resource/ Ad Hoc
Team. Parents are kept informed at all stages of this identification process. (LBPSB, 1998)

- An individualized Education Plan will be developed for any handicapped child in consultation with the parents/guardian and with the student. (LBPSB, 1998)

- **Referral for Services**
  - A referral for service may be made for any student who is experiencing difficulties. (LBPSB, 1998)
  - Prior to the referral process a teacher should have gathered as much information as possible about the child. Sources that should be checked include the student’s cumulative file, confidential file, any existing Individualized Education Plan, or administrative documentation. Additionally, teachers should try to speak with other teachers of the child, or staff from the Student Learning Centre, Planning Room staff, the parents of the child, and perhaps the guidance counselor or other professionals on staff.

- **Resource/Ad Hoc team**
  - The request to have a student discussed by the Resource/Ad Hoc Committee should be made to the grade-level vice-principal. The student will be discussed at the next Ad Hoc meeting.
  - The Ad Hoc meetings are held weekly.
  - A plan of action for the student will be established during the Ad Hoc meeting. This information will be given to teachers.
  - A follow-up discussion will occur at the next AD Hoc meeting.
  - The Resource/Ad Hoc Team includes: the principal, vice-principals, social worker, psychologist, guide counselor, resource teacher, special education technician, behavior technician, and special needs consultant. Additionally, all teachers of the child under discussion at a given meeting will be invited to attend. (LBPSB, 1998)
- An Individualized Education Plan may be developed for any child referred to the Resource Team

- The Individualized Education Plan

  - The IEP is kept and coordinated by the Resource Teacher in conjunction with the administration.
  - The IEP identifies the student and outlines the educational plan for the year, which consists of:
    - Long term goals for the child
    - Specific short term objectives in different areas and the strategies to be used to achieve them
    - An identification of who is responsible for implementing the plan
    - Information about assessment, and whether Progress Reports will be issued in addition to regular term marks.
    - A minimum of ten documented contacts per year with the parent/guardian of the child. The contact may include progress reports, interviews, meetings, and telephone or written communication (LBPSB, 1998).

- Special Needs Services

Special needs services may take a variety of forms, and are not limited to those mentioned below.

  - The classroom teacher may adapt or modify curriculum and delivery to allow the child to meet his/her potential.
    - In an adapted curriculum, the child will be following the same curriculum as the rest of the class, but with changes in such areas as length of time for tasks, preferential seating, quiet room, scribe, or the modality of the evaluation task.
• In a **modified curriculum**, the content of the curriculum is changed, not just the delivery or strategies used. Students in Secondary IV or V who follow a modified curriculum cannot receive credits for the course.

• Small class sizes at the junior level may be offered, specially designed to support the development of numeracy and literacy.

• The allocation of integration aide time in the regular classroom, or in The Learning Center

• Time in the Planning Room
  • Time in the Planning room is provided on an “as needed” basis after consultation between the grade-level vice-principal and the Planning Room Technician. The emphasis is on completing assignments but also on discussion to ensure that the child can successfully integrate back into the classroom after an incident.

• Support from The Learning Centre (TLC)
  • TLC is manned by a resource teacher and by integration aides.
  • A child may be scheduled into TLC all year long (two to four blocks per six day cycle, for example), or for a limited amount of time during the year.
  • The student may attend TLC for different reasons: emotional support, extra time for homework, integration aide time.

• Psychological support may come from various professionals provided by the school or school board (Guidance Counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse etc.)

• Specialized courses may be offered in such areas as: Life Skills, or Study Skills or Work Study
• **Annual Special Needs Resource Allocation Plan**

The Teachers’ Collective Agreement mandates that the staff at each school must vote each year to approve the plan to allocate the Special Needs resources that have been granted to the school by the school board. The vote requires a 75% approval to pass.

While there may be some differences from year to year, the following list reflects the orientation of the school in the allocation of resources.

• **Guiding Principles for the Allocation Plan**

  • To maximize success for all our student
  • To maximize the resources available to the school and within the school
  • To distribute the support
  • services in the most equitable manner possible
  • To provide our students with special needs with as much support as needed, given the resources allocated to the school by the school board
  • To use creative scheduling to accommodate students by selecting appropriate courses and teachers
  • To try to give priority to our students with special needs when creating the master schedule
  • To allow integration aides to function in different settings within the school in order to assist teachers and provide the best support to students.

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