



BOARD POLICY MANUAL	
Approval Date <b>June 2010</b>	Replacing <b>All previous documents</b>
Review Date	Page <b>1 of 14</b>
Policy Section <b>School</b>	Identification <b>SCH-1059</b>

## SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Special Education Program* document is meant to be a helpful summary of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) document entitled, *Special Education: A Handbook for Christian Schools* written by Mary Guldmond. The handbook is a practical, how-to manual for independent schools that is meant as a pedagogical support for the rest of the Christian school curriculum. The purpose of the handbook is to serve as an aide to special education teachers and administrators to help students with learning differences gain greater access to the regular school curriculum.

The summary provided in these pages has been written to answer some of the questions concerning the *Special Education Program* at Trinity Christian School (TCS). We trust our students will benefit greatly from an effective special education program and that it will be used as a useful instrument to improve services to our students with special learning needs.

## ESSENTIALS

Trinity Christian School operates with a “special education mindset” where what is fair isn’t always equal, and where one size does not fit all. In an effort to be fair and developmentally appropriate for each of our students, the following are a number of starting points or program essentials for an effective special education program.

**Awareness:** Teachers have an understanding of the academic, social and emotional needs of children who struggle in the school environment. Creating this awareness and advocating for these children is a major role for the administrator and/or the special education teacher.

**Accommodations\*:** Teachers are flexible, making accommodations in their expectations for students so that each child can experience a measure of success on a daily basis. The special education teacher advocates for such flexibility. (\* **Definition:** Special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required to enable the student to learn and to demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not alter curriculum expectations for the grade level.)

**Modifications\*:** For students with significant learning difficulties, it is necessary to modify program expectations, and to provide resource assistance. The special education teacher will help to identify learning needs and to plan the overall program for these students. (\* **Definition:** Change in curriculum content which does not meet grade level expectations e.g. reduced or simplified expectations, out of grade level testing.)

**Access:** If there are students who struggle academically and/or socially and emotionally, the school will make every effort to have a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) or Educational Assistant (EA) available on a regular basis.

## TERMINOLOGY

“**Special Education**” is an umbrella term that is used consistently to describe the range of services available to students with learning exceptionalities. The term is used in the following contexts: special education ... teacher, coordinator, program, services, department, withdrawal classes.

The term “**Special Needs**” is sometimes used interchangeably with “exceptional needs or exceptionalities”. The term “learning exceptionalities” is used as a general term, while the term “special needs” is used to refer specifically to students with high needs or multiple exceptionalities, such as autism, spina bifida, Down Syndrome, FAS, etc.

## **PERSONNEL**

### **JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER**

#### **Providing Student Services**

- Create a positive, encouraging learning environment.
- Provide direct instruction (individual or small group) based on clearly written long and short term goals to students in the withdrawal program.
- Maintain effective referral, assessment and placement procedures.
- Complete informal assessments as necessary for planning appropriate programs for referred students and for students in the program.
- Develop IEP's and Student Profiles, in collaboration with classroom teachers, as required for students according to OACS recommended procedures.
- Oversee the scheduling and programming of students in the special education program.
- Write anecdotal progress reports once each term for students receiving special education services on a regular basis.
- Provide support to students with emotional and/or social difficulties.
- Ensure close communication between school and home.
- Identify students with exceptional intellectual abilities and monitor their need for enrichment opportunities or other services.
- In collaboration with classroom teachers, implement enrichment programs in the classroom or through pullout programs.
- Provide educational guidance services as assigned by the principal.
- Supervise ESL program and services as assigned by the principal.
- Supervise administration of standardized assessments, such as CTBS and Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests. Analyze and communicate student results.

#### **Coordinating Para-educator Services**

- Supervise para-educators and/or volunteers who are assigned to work with individual students with learning exceptionalities.
- Develop and supervise programs of students with major learning exceptionalities.
- Collaborate with classroom teachers and para-educators to write student progress reports at the end of each term for students with high needs.
- Serve as the primary contact with the student's parents for issues regarding the program of the students with high needs.
- In collaboration with the principal, complete year-end evaluations of para-educators.

#### **Working with School Personnel and Other Agencies**

- Schedule meetings with classroom teachers once per term, or more frequently if needed, to review all students on their class list. Review progress of students in the special education program, and note any academic or social/emotional concerns about other students in the class.
- Lead student support team meetings following an assessment or to address a student concern.
- Provide support and resources to classroom teachers to assist them in implementation of necessary accommodations for students and/or modification of student programs.
- Keep the principal informed about student concerns and about significant outcomes of meetings with teachers and/or parents.
- Coordinate CCAC services, serving as liaison to the CCAC Case Manager, managing administrative tasks such as referrals for school health services, and meeting regularly with the therapists who provide the services.
- Conduct assessments to screen for school admission, as requested by the principal.

## PARA-EDUCATORS

The role of the para-educator has expanded as children with major exceptionalities enter TCS and its inclusive classrooms. The relationship between special education teachers and para-educators depends on the role and job description of the para-educator:

1. An **Educational Assistant (EA)** provides educational support to student(s) with learning difficulties, and is qualified to do so. The position is instructional in nature and is the most common para-educator role.
2. A **Teacher Assistant (TA)**, sometimes referred to as a teacher's aide, is assigned mostly non-educational, clerical duties and monitoring of students to assist the classroom teacher.
3. A **Personal Support Worker (PSW)** is funded or partially funded through the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC). A PSW assists a student(s) with medical or health needs. A PSW may also be assigned some educational support duties which are funded by the ministry of health.

## A COLLABORATIVE TEAM

When a para-educator is assigned to a regular classroom to assist in the classroom with learning exceptionalities, the special education teacher needs to be a vital part of the instructional team. While the classroom teacher guides the daily work of the para-educator, the special education teacher communicates frequently with the para-educator and the classroom teacher about the progress and overall program of specific students with learning difficulties. The involvement of the special educational teacher will be more intensive for high needs students. Students with exceptionalities are blessed by the collaborative work of the team: Para-educators, Classroom Teachers, and Special Education Teachers.

## ROLES AND RELATIONSHIP

### Role of the EA or PSW:

- assigned to work with specific student(s);
- provides direct services to students;
- works under the supervision of a teacher and/or special education teacher;
- may be asked to plan minute-by-minute, or hour-by-hour to implement a program;
- communicates with parents only as directed by the classroom teacher or special education teacher;
- defers to the classroom teacher or special education teacher when a parent expresses concern.

### Classroom Teacher's Role in Relation to Para-educator:

- looks after day-to-day structure of classroom activities;
- assigns and directs activities of para-educator accordingly;
- interacts with high needs student as normally as possible;
- finds ways to include the student in classroom activities;
- encourages acceptance from classmates;
- encourages para-educator to assist other students as well, to fade support when it is not needed by a special needs student;
- provides on-the-job coaching to para-educators;
- monitors the performance of para-educators.

### Special Education Teacher's Role in Relation to Classroom Teacher:

- must be aware of educational needs of all students with learning exceptionalities;
- in collaboration with the classroom teacher, writes Student Profiles and IEPs for students in special education and in monitoring programs;
- works with classroom teachers to ensure appropriate accommodations and modifications are made in the classroom;
- is responsible for the design and supervision of special needs student programs;

- collaborates with the classroom teacher to determine appropriate delegation of tasks for the para-educator;
- coordinates CCAC services, school health support services, assessments, etc. and keeps teacher informed about services and therapy results.

### **Special Education Teacher's Role in Relation to Para-educator**

- plans overall program goals and objectives for students with para-educator support;
- conferences regularly with para-educator regarding student's progress, behaviour, and overall program;
- communicates with parents regarding program issues and concerns;
- provides continuity for the student from year to year.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **REFERRAL, ASSESSMENT, AND PLACEMENT PROCEDURES**

At TCS, the school team is fluid in composition, minimally consisting of the special education teacher, the principal, and the student's classroom teacher. The team may include others with expertise or knowledge of the student such as rotary teachers, a guidance counselor, or an educational assistant. The team works together to support the student, the parents and each other. They collaborate, consult, and share information and knowledge to identify strategies that may increase the student's learning success.

#### **Classroom Screening**

1. The classroom teacher recognizes that the student is experiencing difficulty in learning.
2. The teacher initiates the problem-solving process by discussing concerns with the special education teacher, the previous teacher, reviewing information in the OSR, making initial program adjustments, etc.
3. The teacher communicates with the parents to gather additional and relevant information.
4. Parents may advise the teacher of a concern and initiate the request for assessment.

#### **Referral Process**

1. The classroom teacher completes the special education referral form.
2. The principal approves the referral for assessment.
3. The classroom teacher contacts the parents, explaining the request for a special education assessment.
4. The special education teacher sends home a form requesting permission to complete a diagnostic assessment.
5. Parents return the signed permission form to the school.

#### **Assessment Process**

1. The special education teacher collects available data through review of the OSR, observation in the classroom, and consultation with teachers and parents.
2. The special education teacher administers and interprets appropriate diagnostic tests.
3. The school support team meets to discuss the assessment results and recommendations. The team consists of the principal, the special education teacher, and the classroom teacher. The team conference may also include para-educators, other teachers, and/or professionals who have information or expertise to share. This meeting is led by the special education teacher and deliberates which placement, interventions, accommodations, or specific supports are needed for the student to achieve success in the learning environment.
4. The school support team prepares a recommendation regarding optimal placement for delivery of special education services. The placement determination may be in one of four options in the special education program, or be in the special education monitoring program, which tracks continuation of satisfactory progress. The determination of placement is made by the principal.

**Regular class with indirect support**

The teacher receives specialized consultative services. The student's profile identifies the student's strengths and needs and classroom accommodations to be implemented by the teacher. The student's ongoing progress is monitored.

**Regular class with resource assistance (EA or PSW)**

The student is placed in the regular class for most or all of the day.

- The student receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom from an educational assistant under the supervision of a qualified special education teacher. The resource assistance may range from one instructional period per day to assistance for the full day.
- Support is provided to the student for medical, health, and self help needs (by a qualified personal support worker (PSW), under the supervision of a qualified special education teacher.

**Regular class with withdrawal assistance**

The student is placed in the regular class and receives instruction outside the classroom for less than 50 per cent of the school day, from a qualified special education teacher.

**Special class with partial integration**

The student is placed in a special education class or in the resource room for at least 50 per cent of the school day, but is integrated with a regular class for at least one instructional period daily.

5. Conference with parents. Members of the support team meet with the student's parents to discuss the assessment results and recommendations regarding special education program and services. Depending on the complexity of assessment results, the results may be communicated in less formal ways, but the student's parents are encouraged to take an active role in the process of program planning and decision-making.
6. Referrals to other agencies or therapists may be initiated.

**Implementation of Special Education Services**

1. The special education teacher develops a Student Profile or an IEP for the student, in collaboration with the classroom teacher. The brief Student Profile or more extensive IEP includes instructional goals and objectives and serves as an educational plan for the student.
2. The principal signs approval of admission to the program.
3. Outcomes of the assessment may also show a need for individualized instruction on a withdrawal basis and/or other resource assistance provided by the special education teacher as per educational plan.
4. The classroom teacher implements program accommodations and modifications as per educational plan and consults with the special education teacher regarding evaluation or other concerns.
5. The special education teacher schedules regular contact with the classroom teacher, to collaboratively review effectiveness of program and make program adjustments.
6. The special education teacher engages in ongoing evaluation and assessment of students in the active resource program to monitor need for adjustment of program objectives and strategies.
7. The special education teacher conferences on a regular basis with the principal to keep the principal informed about both the progress and concerns regarding students in the resource program.
8. The special education teacher reports on the achievement of students in the active resource program, normally in the form of an anecdotal report, at the end of each regular reporting period.

### **Demission from Program**

When a student is no longer in need of special education services, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The special education teacher consults with the classroom teacher and with the parents, and may consult with the student.
2. The principal gives consent and signs appropriate form.
3. The special education teacher includes a demission statement in the final achievement report, similar to the following:

*"In view of the record of his/her progress, \_\_\_\_\_ will be demitted from the special education program at the end of this term. During the next academic year, \_\_\_\_\_'s program will be monitored to ensure that satisfactory progress continues."*

### **Readmission to the Program**

If in pursuant years the student's learning needs should become such that further special education support is indicated, the student may be readmitted to the program. The process will be simplified, but includes the following:

1. Consent of the principal.
2. Permission from the parents.
3. Assessment only as needed for appropriate program planning.

## **APPENDIX A: BEST PRACTICES FOR WORKING WITH PARA-EDUCATORS**

*Classroom teachers often have little background in working effectively with para-educators as teacher education programs are typically lacking in preparing them for teacher-para-educator teamwork. The successful implementation of programs for special needs students is often dependent on para-educator support, making the para-educator an important member of the educational team. The following list of recommendations constitutes best practice for working effectively with para-educators:*

1. Welcome the para-educator into your classroom, demonstrating a genuine interest in her/him.
2. Be familiar with the school's policies regarding para-educators. Know the ground rules about working hours, breaks, and supervision.
3. View the teacher and para-educator as an educational team. The working relationship should be one of cooperation, camaraderie, and professionalism.
4. Share your classroom expectations with the para-educator. Para-educators need to know your expectations for classroom management and student behaviour, as well as curricular expectations for specific students.
5. Specific roles and responsibilities for para-educators and teachers should be well defined. Job descriptions should include duties and responsibilities, orientation and training requirements, and procedures for supervision and evaluation.
6. Direct and supervise the para-educator. While the special education teacher provides the para-educator with program goals and instructions for working with specific students, the classroom teacher should guide their daily work.
7. Communication with para-educators. Feedback is critical to para-educator success, and it is an essential quality for a supervisor. Structure regular meetings to improve communication (even a few minutes a day will help).
8. Recognize that para-educators have experience and knowledge to share. They can provide anecdotal information useful in making educational decisions, and provide effective techniques for managing student behaviour or facilitating student friendships and classroom participation.
9. As the teacher, take ownership of all the students in the classroom. As a classroom leader, take an active interest in and responsibility for all students, also the special needs student who is supported by a para-educator.
10. Show respect for para-educators. Through modeling respect, students will learn that para-educators are an integral part of the school and are to be valued and appreciated. Foster an ongoing climate of respect which recognizes the efforts of the para-educators in the school. The job satisfaction and retention of para-educators are linked to the presence or absence of mutual respect and recognition for their contributions to the educational community.

## **APPENDIX B: CLASSROOM ACCOMODATIONS LIST**

### **GENERAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

#### **Environmental and Organizational Accommodations:**

- agenda or communication book
- encouragement and positive feedback
- homework club to monitor assignments
- limiting of distractions
- nonverbal cues
- predictability and routine
- preferential seating
- opportunity for movement
- opportunity to stand while working
- quiet work space

#### **Instructional Accommodations:**

- additional time for assignments
- advance organizer for lesson
- alternative task
- chunking of tasks
- oral and written instructions
- peer coaching
- photocopied notes for highlighting
- pre-teaching (to introduce new concepts)
- reduced tasks
- repeat/rephrase instructions
- resources at appropriate level
- tactile learning materials
- teach test-taking skills
- visual clues
- word bank

#### **Evaluation Accommodations:**

- additional time for tests
- alternative evaluation
- alternative grading scale
- no penalizing for spelling errors
- reduced tasks
- reference sheet of formulas/facts
- study review sheet
- open book testing
- photocopied notes for test preparation
- use of scribe
- use of word processor/spell check/grammar check

## READING

### Instructional Accommodations:

- age appropriate material
- audio taped information
- audio taped questions
- books on audio tape
- braille reading material
- enlarged print
- highlighting
- material read to student
- high interest/low vocabulary books
- individualized reading program
- instructions given orally
- pictorial books
- predictable and pattern books
- shared reading partner
- tracking guide (e.g. ruler)
- vocabulary drill
- video novel study

## WRITING

### Instructional Accommodations:

- alphabet line on desk
- cloze activities
- computer (word processing)
- editing support
- guided notes (skeleton outline)
- high frequency word list
- left to right progression cues
- graphic organizer or response templates
- personal dictionary
- photocopied notes
- reference sheet for handwriting/editing
- underline/ highlight answers
- use of scribe
- use of technology (eg., Kidspiration, Word Q)
- writing aids (eg., pencil grip)

### Evaluation Accommodations:

- audio taped answers
- use of word processor/spell check/grammar check
- use of pictures/charts/models/maps to demonstrate learning
- use of scribe

## **MATHEMATICS**

### **Instructional Accommodations:**

- colour coding for sequence of steps
- exemplar on desk
- graph paper, large squares
- multiplication chart
- number line on desk
- manipulatives
- peer assistance
- photocopied worksheet
- pre-teaching of math vocabulary
- real-life examples
- use of calculator
- use of technology for drill and practice
- verbalize while problem solving
- visual aids

### **Evaluation Accommodations:**

- reference sheet for formulas
- use of multiplication chart
- use of calculator

## **ORGANIZATION**

### **Environmental and Organizational Accommodations**

- daily planner or agenda
- desk & locker organization monitoring
- extra textbook at home
- homework / communication book
- homework monitoring
- increased storage / desk space
- notebook organization assistance
- preferential locker position
- visual schedule strips

### **Instructional Accommodations:**

- checklists
- colour coded notes
- graphic organizers

## **BEHAVIOUR**

### **Environmental and Organizational Accommodations**

- assistance with transitions/change
- behaviour contract
- classroom management system
- clearly defined expectations and consequences
- consistency and structure
- ignoring of inappropriate behaviours
- parental involvement
- positive reinforcement
- preferential seating
- preparation for change / transition
- proximity control
- rehearsal of expectations
- social skills – direct instruction
- supervised withdrawal or time-outs

## **LISTENING, LANGUAGE, SPEECH**

### **Environmental and Organizational Accommodations:**

- alert student to changes in topics/activities
- ensure student attention and focus
- keep distractions minimal

### **Instructional Accommodations:**

- augmentative communication strategies
- cue student to stop and listen to complete instructions
- ensure understanding of instructions
- model clear speech sounds and correct sentence structure
- pair verbal input with visuals
- preview/review vocabulary concepts
- repeat/rephrase instructions
- provide verbal input using reduced rate of speech
- simplified instructions
- teach awareness of facial expressions, gestures, body language
- teach eye contact/face to face communication

## **ENRICHMENT**

### **Instructional Accommodations:**

- curriculum differentiation by kind
- curriculum differentiation by pace
- curriculum differentiation by depth
- curriculum differentiation by breadth
- capitalize on interests, talents and abilities
- curriculum compacting
- use of pre-test to determine exemption from unit
- accelerated instruction
- more complex reading resources
- opportunities for peer teaching of new material
- independent research/project

## APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY

**Accommodations-** Special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required to enable the student to learn and to demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not alter curriculum expectations for the grade level.

**Alternative expectations-** Expectations that are not represented in the regular curriculum, e.g, mobility, personal care, and daily living.

**Assistive technology-** Hardware and software to assist students with physical, cognitive and speech difficulties.

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder-** A syndrome that interferes with an individual's capacity to regulate activity level, inhibit behavior, and attend to tasks in developmentally appropriate ways.

**Autism-** A spectrum disorder that affects an individual's ability to communicate, form relationships with others, and relate appropriately to the environment.

**Automaticity-** The ability to recall a fact or skill very quickly and without much effort or attention, e.g. tying up a shoelace, knowing multiplication facts.

**Differentiated instruction-** A flexible way of teaching in which a variety of approaches to content, process, and product are used in order to address different levels of readiness, learning needs and interests of the students.

**Direct Instruction-** an instructional approach to academic subjects that emphasizes the use of carefully sequenced steps that include demonstration, modeling, guided practice, and independent application.

**Dyscalculia-** a severe difficulty in understanding and using symbols or functions needed for success in mathematics; a condition that causes persistent problems with processing numerical calculations.

**Dyslexia-** A neurologically based learning disorder characterized by difficulties in understanding or using one or more areas of language, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and spelling.

**Dyspraxia-** Severe difficulty in drawing, writing, buttoning, and other tasks requiring fine motor skill, or in sequencing the necessary movements.

**Educational Assistant (EA)** – Assigned to provide educational support to students with learning difficulties.

**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)-** One of the disorders within the FASD spectrum, FAS differentially impacts language and communication, social/behavioral, academic/cognitive, and adaptive functioning.

**Guided Notes-** Skeleton outline of lesson or lecture.

**Inclusion-** Overarching policy, provides equitable access to general education setting; student may be provided with supplemental support and resources (e.g., EA or PSW support).

**Individual Educational Plan (IEP)** – A written plan that describes the special education program and/or services required by a particular student and identifies learning expectation and necessary accommodations.

**Integration-** A locational, social, and functional placement in which only a general education teacher is responsible for all students (no special education support).

**Learned helplessness-** A form of depression which gives rise to a sense of helplessness or an inability to cope with or escape from situations, even when escape is possible.

**Learning modalities-** Approaches to assessment or instruction stressing the auditory, visual, or tactile avenues for learning, according to individual need or preference.

**Learning styles-** Approaches to assessment or instruction that emphasize variations in temperament, attitude and preferred manner of tackling a task, such as active/passive, reflective/impulsive, or verbal/spatial styles.

**Mainstreaming-** Special class placement with some integration (e.g., for P.E., music, assemblies); can also be partial integration, with some withdrawal classes for academic skill development.

**Metacognition-** “thinking about thinking”, or a form of self-monitoring in which a student thinks about the process by which he can learn various subject matter most efficiently.

**Metacognitive strategies-** Includes use of self-talk or self-verbalized directions to activate Metacognition.

**Modification-** Change in curriculum content that does not meet grade level expectations e.g. reduced or simplified expectations, out of grade level testing.

**Para-educator-** A well-trained and active participant in the instructional process and delivery of direct services to students- works under the supervision of a teacher or special education teacher.

**Personal Support Worker (PSW)-** Person assigned to assist student with medical or health needs.

**Phonemic Awareness-** The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.

**Phonological Awareness-** The awareness that language is composed of sounds and the understanding of the relationship of these sounds.

**Psychoeducational Assessment-** A battery of tests executed by an educational psychologist, which provides an estimate of a student’s cognitive abilities and educational achievement levels, and makes recommendations for appropriate educational programming for the student.

**Reciprocal teaching-** Teacher models strategies for comprehension of informational text using four main activities: questioning, clarifying, summarizing and predicting.

**Rehearsal-** The reprocessing of information in working memory- the ability to practice input for later recall- the means by which incoming information reaches long-term memory.

**Resilience-** The ability to recover quickly from the adverse effects of early experience without apparent negative psychological consequences.

**Retention-** The preservation of learning in long-term storage in such a way that it can be identified and recalled quickly and accurately.

**Scaffolding-** Giving students temporary support for tasks beyond their current capabilities and withdrawing supports gradually as the student becomes able to do the tasks without help.

**Segregation-** Program placement that involves no interaction with regular setting students.

**Self-esteem-** Global, overall view of self, or how much a person likes, accepts, and respects himself as a person.

**Self-concept-** View of self that is domain specific.

**Self-efficacy-** How well someone thinks they can perform.

**Student Profile-** A document for sharing important information between the special education teacher and the classroom teacher about a student’s strengths, weaknesses, and need for accommodations in the classroom.

**Teacher Assistant-** A person who assists the classroom teacher with mostly non-educational or clerical duties.

**Transfer-** The influence that past learning has on new learning, and the degree to which the new learning will be useful in the learner’s future.

**Working Memory-** The temporary memory where information is stored just long enough to complete the activity at hand.