

Positive Advocacy Strategies The IPRC Process

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Positive Strategies/The IPRC Process

This webinar will look at the Identification Placement and Review Committee in some depth. Some basic advocacy skills will be discussed.

Materials that form this webinar are taken from Ministry of Education sources. A complete list of resource links will be provided.



Positive Strategies/The IPRC Process

Ed Mahony has worked in special education in Ontario schools for over 25 years.

Ed has taught courses related to special education and ASD to teachers and educational assistants throughout Ontario.

Ed teaches the workshop “Positive Advocacy” across Ontario and provides individual consultation to parents.



Parent Advocacy

Most parent advocates share a collection of important knowledge and skills.

- An understanding of special education regulations and rules.
- An understanding of special education law.
- A sense of “procedural advocacy”.
- "People Smarts "... A realistic sense of what they want and how to work with staff to achieve their goal.



Special Education Regulations

- Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)
- Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Specialized Equipment
- Suspensions and Exclusions
- Inclusion
- Policy Program Memorandum 140
- Secondary Schools



What Is An IPRC?

- Legislated defined rights and responsibilities of parents and school boards.
- Designed to build toward appropriate programming.
- Provides consistency across the province.
- Think of it as the foundation of special education.
- Ministry allows boards to shape how they write IPRCs to meet needs.
- Some defined common expectations.



What Is An IPRC?

An Identification Placement and Review Committee is:

- Not exotic knowledge.
- A process where all parties involved in a student's life are granted access to this knowledge.
- Guide to Special Education Services.
- Shared Solutions.



What Is An IPRC?

An Identification Placement and Review Committee can decide:

- Is a student exceptional?
- What is the exceptionality?
- What is the appropriate placement for the student?



Procedural Fairness

IPRCs are mandated in section 181/81 of the Education Act. Being a governmental procedure; this process must be procedurally fair.

- Transparency.
- Right to attend.
- Right to appeal.
- Right to a representative.



Who Needs An IPRC?

An exceptional pupil is “a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program....”

Students are identified according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.



To Identify Or...

The Education Act and Tribunal decisions are clear in their expectation that school boards identify students who require special programs and services to meet their educational needs.

An IPRC designation affords the student and parents a series of rights that are not by default available to them otherwise.



How Is An IPRC Meeting Requested?

The Principal of the student's school:

- Must request an IPRC meeting for the student, upon receiving a written request from the parent;
- May, with written notice to the parent, refer the student to an IPRC when the principal and the student's teacher or teachers believe that the student may benefit from a special education program.

Within **15** days of receiving a written request, or giving the parent notice, the principal must provide a copy of the board's Parent's Guide to Special Education to the parent, as well as an acknowledgement of the parent's request and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC will meet.



Who Can Attend?

- Parents and pupils 16 years of age or older.
 - May be present and participate in all committee discussions.
 - May be present when decision is made.
- Principal of the student's school.
- Other resource people.
- A representative of the parent or student 16 years of age.
- Interpreter, if one is required.



Who Requests That Others Attend?

Either the parent or the principal of the student's school may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting.



What Information Should Parents Receive Before The IPRC?

At least **10** days in advance of the meeting, the chair of the IPRC will provide to the parent, written notification of the meeting and an invitation to attend the meeting as an important partner in considering their child's placement. This letter will provide notification of the date, time, and place of the meeting, and it will ask the parent to indicate whether they will attend.

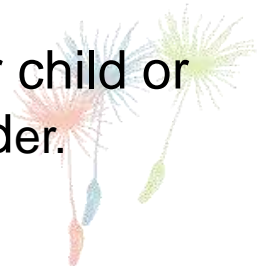
Before the IPRC meeting occurs, the parent will receive a written copy of any information about their child that the chair of the IPRC has received. This may include the results of assessments or a summary of information.



What Happens At An IPRC?

The IPRC will review all available information about the student. They will:

- Consider an educational assessment;
- Consider, subject to the provisions of the Health Care Consent Act, 1996, a health or psychological assessment conducted by a qualified practitioner if they feel that such an assessment is required to make a correct identification or placement decision;
- Interview the student, with the parent's permission, if the child is less than 16 years of age, if they feel it would be useful to do so; and
- Consider any information that the parent submits about their child or that the student submits if he or she is 16 years of age or older.



What Happens At An IPRC?

The committee may discuss any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for the student.

Committee members **will** discuss any such proposal at the parent's request, or at the request of the student if the student is 16 years of age or older.

Parents are encouraged to ask questions and join in the discussion.

Following the discussion, after all the information has been presented and considered, the committee will make its decision.



What Happens At An IPRC?

1. Strengths
2. Needs
3. Exceptional?
4. Exceptionality
5. Placement
6. Recommendations



Strengths and Needs

The strengths and needs of the students are discussed and included in the IPRC statement.

Strengths and needs are important because appropriate programming as developed in the Individual Education Plan should flow from the strengths and needs in the IPRC statement.

Individualized strengths and needs and drop down menus.



Exceptionality

- Exceptionalities must be chosen from the list in the Education Act.
- The Ministry has made it clear that this list must not bar a student from being identified.
- **Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities:**
- **Behaviour**
- **Communication** (Autism, deaf and hard of hearing, Language Impairment, Learning Disability)
- **Intellectual** (Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Delay, Developmental Delay)
- **Physical** (Physical Disability, Blind and Low Vision)
- **Multiple Categories**



Placement

- A regular class with indirect support.
- A regular class with resource assistance.
- A regular class with withdrawal assistance.
- A special education class with partial integration.
- A special education class full time.



Discussions/Recommendations

You have the right to request that program and services be discussed during the IPRC. If you do, the IPRC is bound to discuss them.

The IPRC may discuss programs and services without being asked by the parent.

The IPRC is not permitted to make any decisions about program and services.

If a student with special education needs is placed in a regular class setting, the IPRC must identify special education services and programs that will be available to the student in sufficient clarity.

Before a student with special education needs is placed in a special education class, the IPRC will discuss whether needs can be met in a regular class with appropriate special education services.



Considerations

Before the IPRC can consider placing the student in a special education class, it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services will:

- Meet the student's needs; and
- Be consistent with parental preferences.

Regular class placement should be considered first. Can the child meet program goals in regular class with appropriate programs and services?

If the committee decides that the student should be placed in a special education class, it must state the reasons for that decision in its written statement of decision.



Written Decision

The IPRC's written statement of decision will state:

- Whether the IPRC has identified the student as exceptional;
- Where the IPRC has identified the student as exceptional,
- The categories and definitions of any exceptionalities identified, as they are defined by the Ministry of Education;
- The IPRC's description of the student's strengths and needs;
- The IPRC's placement decision; and
- The IPRC's recommendations regarding a special education program and special education services;
- Where the IPRC has decided that the student should be placed in a special education class, and the reasons for that decision.



What Happens After The IPRC?

If the parent agrees with the IPRC decision, he or she will be asked to indicate, by signing their name, agreement with the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC. The statement of decision may be signed at the IPRC meeting or taken home and returned.

If the IPRC has identified the student as an exceptional pupil and the parent agreed with the IPRC identification and placement decision, the board will promptly notify the principal of the school. At this time, the special education program will be provided and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for the student will be developed.



Placement Review

A review IPRC meeting will be held within the school year, unless the principal of the school at which the special education program is being provided receives written notice from the parent, dispensing with the annual review.

The parent may request a review IPRC meeting any time after their child has been in a special education program for 3 months.



If You Disagree

If the parent does not agree with either the identification or placement decision made by the IPRC, he or she may:

Within **15** days of receipt of the decision, request that the IPRC hold a second meeting to discuss their concerns; or

Within **30** days of receipt of the decision, file a notice of appeal with the secretary of the board.

If the parent does not agree with the decision after the second meeting, he or she may file a notice of appeal within **15** days of receipt of the decision.

If the parent does not consent to the IPRC decision and does not appeal it, the board will instruct the principal to implement the IPRC decision.



What Can You Disagree With?

Primarily, you can appeal whether or not a student is exceptional, the type of exceptionality and the placement.

Tribunal decisions have expanded these to other aspects that affect placement or exceptionality.

The tribunal has stated that program and services are intertwined with placement and that sometimes a placement is appropriate or inappropriate based on the availability of programs.

The tribunal has also noted that needs statements are necessary so that proper exceptionality and placement decisions can be made.



What Do You Do With This Knowledge?

The IPRC is a tool, nothing more and nothing less.

What we do with IPRC must be based on our individual circumstances.

How we use this tool is based on each child's need and circumstances.

When considering what to do, the focus always must be on the student and what is in their best interest.



What Do You Do With This Knowledge?

- Medium and long term strategy.
- Does not suddenly change things... It builds towards things.
- Think long term...
- What is your vision for your child? Your vision must be thought out, informed and open to change.
- You sell your vision of your child to others in your child's life.
- Develop and promote a vision of who your child is and what they need to succeed.



What Do You Do With This Knowledge?

The IPRC is a physical expression of that vision.



What Do You Do With This Knowledge?

Scenario One

Grade 9 boy with ASD/Asperger's Syndrome.

Strengths: Terms that indicate his academic/potential academic ability.

Needs: Terms that capture his social deficits his inability to read sufficiently to access curriculum and issues with anxiety.

Exceptionality: Autism.

Placement: Regular class with withdrawal (supported by strengths and needs).

Discussion/Recommendations: Comment that flow from his strengths and needs and support the placement.



What Do You Do With This Knowledge?

Scenario Two

Grade 5 girl with ASD

Strengths:

Needs: Terms that capture her social, sensory, life skills, safety, hygiene, communication, anxiety and crisis behaviour needs.

Exceptionality: Autism.

Placement: (supported by strengths and needs).

Discussion/Recommendations: Comments that flow from her strengths and needs and support the placement.



Key Points

- Consider identifying your child.
- Pay attention to strengths and needs.
- Have an informed vision of your child.
- Link up strengths and needs to a reasonable vision of your child.
- Do discuss programs and services.
- Do stress required statements about programming and services.
- Know about appeals.



About Appeals, Regulations And The Law

- IPRCs are potentially appealable.
- It is very, very rare.
- Our relationship with the law.
- Laws give us structure and remind us of our obligations.



Advocating In A Positive And Assertive Manner

The Ministry document **Shared Solutions** talks about acquiescence, avoidance and confrontation and the limitations of these approaches.

What I call **positive advocacy** is an approach where we show respect for the views and experiences of educators while at the same time actively advocating for what we feel is our child's best interests using accepted practices and appropriate regulations and procedures.



Resource Links

- Ontario Education Act
- http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90e02_e.htm
- Shared Solutions, Ministry of Education
- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/shared.pdf>
- Special Education, A Guide for Educators, Ministry of Education
- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide/specedhandbooke.pdf>
- IPRC Highlights, Ministry of Education
- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/hilites.html>



Mahony Advocacy

For more detailed workshop material references visit:

Mahony Advocacy

<http://mahonyadvocacy.com/>

The IPRC is but one of the valuable tools used in parent advocacy.

To explore parent advocacy more comprehensively attend the Workshop **Positive Advocacy**. It will be held in many locations across the province in the upcoming year.

Details will be available on the **Mahony Advocacy** site and through **Autism Ontario**

