**Standard 2: The Board’s General Model for Special Education**

**The Halton District School Board’s General Philosophy on Special Education**

The Halton District School Board is committed to the principle that learning is a developmental process and children proceed through the stages of development at varying rates. It is also committed to the principle that early identification and intervention to address learning needs is the most effective way to ensure the learner remains confident about their own abilities and is engaged in the schooling process in years to come.

**Student Services Mission Statement**

“Our schools work in partnership with students, families, and community to meet the educational needs of every student”.

**Statements of Belief**

We believe that:

* needs should be identified and concerns should be addressed at the earliest possible stage;
* education of the whole child (social, intellectual, physical, emotional, etc.) is an important responsibility of the school and staff working with students;
* shared responsibility for meeting the needs of the student necessitates an active partnership involving the student, the family, the community and the school;
* inclusion of students in their regular classroom and neighbourhood school environment to the greatest extent possible is most desirable, when it is in the best interest of the child, and in accordance with parental wishes;
* a range of placements and programs is necessary to meet the needs of learners;
* alternate placements may be provided outside of the neighbourhood school for students who would most benefit from them when necessary;
* there should be equitable access to programs;
* professional development and ongoing training is essential for all staff within the system;
* facilitating growth is a continuous process for all students receiving special education programs and services;
* our schools will continue to foster inclusive environments so that all students are supported and included;
* Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design for Learning are teaching methodologies that respond to the characteristics of a wide group of learners and enable educators to respond effectively to the strengths and needs of all students.

To actualize these beliefs we will:

* collaborate with parents/guardians and members of the broader community (individuals, groups, provincial ministries or agencies) involved in supporting the child;
* teach students the knowledge and skills that they need either as per the Ministry of Education Ontario Curriculum, or in accordance with alternate programming or alternate curriculum expectations as outlined on students’ IEPs;
* continue to build the capacity of Halton District School Board staff to respond effectively to students’ needs;
* constantly strive to ensure equity of access and opportunity for students in the Halton District School Board;
* collaborate with staff in the School Programs, Equity and Inclusive Schools and Safe Schools departments to ensure the full inclusion of students with disabilities and special needs;
* provide students with disabilities and special needs with opportunities to earn their Community Service Hours regardless of their placement or program. This will be based on each individual student’s IEP.

**Compliance Statement**

The Special Education Plan of the Halton District School Board has been developed in compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act and Regulations made under the Act, and other relevant legislation.

**Disability**

Disability as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Commission Section 10 (1) of the *Code,* is defined as:

1. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
4. a mental disorder; or
5. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.*

“Disability” should be interpreted in broad terms. It includes both present and past conditions, as well as a subjective component based on perception of disability. Although sections 10(a) to (e) set out various types of conditions, it is clear that they are merely illustrative and not exhaustive. Protection for persons with disabilities under this subsection explicitly includes mental illness, developmental disabilities and learning disabilities. Even minor illnesses or infirmities can be “disabilities,” if a person can show that she was treated unfairly because of the perception of a disability. The Halton District School Board recognizes that equity of opportunity and equity of access to the full range of programs, the delivery of services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful educational and social outcomes for those served by the school system as well as those who serve the system. ([HDSB Equity & Inclusive Education Policy](https://www.hdsb.ca/our-board/Policy/EquityInclusiveEducationPolicyBP.pdf#search=Inclusive%20Education%20Policy)).

**Accommodating Students with Disabilities: Principles**

Once a disability-related need has been identified, or a case of discrimination has been established, education providers have a duty to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities, unless to do so would cause undue hardship. Accommodation is a means of preventing and removing barriers that impede students with disabilities from participating fully in the educational environment. Accommodation involves three principles: dignity, individualization and inclusion.

1. **Respect for Dignity:** Students with disabilities have the right to receive educational services in a manner that respects their dignity. Human dignity encompasses individual self-respect and self-worth. It involves physical and psychological integrity and empowerment. It is harmed when individuals are marginalized, stigmatized, ignored or devalued. Accommodation solutions should therefore respect the dignity of students with disabilities, and those that do not will not be considered appropriate.
2. **Individualized Accommodation:** Each student’s needs are unique and must be considered afresh when an accommodation request is made. At all times, the emphasis must be on the individual student and not on the category of disability. Blanket approaches to accommodation that rely on labels and generalizations are not acceptable.
3. **Inclusion and Full Participation:** In some circumstances, the best way to ensure the dignity of persons with disabilities may be to provide separate or specialized services. However, education providers must first try to build or adapt educational services to accommodate students with disabilities in a way that promotes their inclusion and full participation and enables barrier-free access.

**Special Education Delivery Model**

The Halton region is a large geographic area which, for administrative purposes of the Student Services Department, has been divided into three areas:

* **North** Halton includes schools within Milton and Halton Hills
* **East** Halton includes schools within Oakville
* **West** Halton includes schools within Burlington

The entire region, for the purposes of the special education delivery model, is referred to as the ‘district’.

Equity of Access

In order to ensure consistency of implementation for special education, all operational procedures are developed at the district level by the Student Services department. Services coordinated through the district office are meant to be accessed by all schools, programs and staff within the Halton District School Board.

Special Education services are usually available to students within their geographic area and should be consistent across the district. Students generally do not need to cross area boundaries to access programming or services with the exception of a small number of programs and classes that serve students from more than one geographic area (e.g.: PROPS). Students for whom a self-contained class: partial integration or full-time has been deemed appropriate by an IPRC should be able to access those placements within their geographic area, and at the closest/most appropriate location where ever possible.

Regional/Area Support

The district Student Services department meets regularly to ensure consistency of delivery and operation throughout the Halton District School Board. Schools in Halton are organized under the supervision of a “Family of Schools” superintendent. Student Services staff provide support to each Family of Schools through Student Services teams consisting of Senior Managers of Professional Services, Instructional Program Leaders, Itinerant Resource Teachers, Professional Support Services Staff and Itinerant Educational Assistants.These teams provide support to students, families and schools.

Board Policies

Halton District School Board Governance Policies and Board Policies are available to the public on the Board’s website. Operational policies may be found using the following steps:

* Locate the [HDSB](http://www.hdsb.ca)website
* Click on “Boardroom and Trustees” from the home page;
* Click on Board Policies on the left side of the page.