# Standard 6: Educational and Other Assessments

## Assessment Practices

The Halton District School Board uses a range of assessment strategies in order to develop appropriate programs and interventions for students. The intent of any assessment is ultimately to assist the student by providing staff with insights into the student’s strengths, needs and learning profile. Assessment strategies range from routine classroom practice to formalized assessments, which can only be conducted by professionals with specific knowledge and training.

When assessments involving personnel other than the classroom teacher or special education resource teacher are being considered, the process will be discussed with parents/guardians (and students as appropriate) beforehand to insure informed consent can be provided. Signed consent is obtained for such assessments to be undertaken.

## Sharing of Information and Privacy of Information

Sharing of information about students, including assessment results, is restricted by legislative provisions.

* The Education Act (1990, and all current amendments)
* Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA, 2004)
* Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004

It is the policy and practice of the Halton District School Board to respect and abide by such legislation. Informed, signed parental/guardian consent is obtained by all staff in order to share information with outside professionals (e.g. physicians), agencies, or schools.

## Identification vs. Diagnosis

**Identification** is defined by the Education Act and states that a student has special needs and is an Exceptional Pupil (under one or more of the Ministry Categories). **Diagnosis** as per the regulated Health Professions Act (RHRA, 1991) means “identifying a disease or disorder as the cause of symptoms of an individual in circumstances in which it is reasonably forseeable that the individual will rely on the diagnosis”

## Educational Assessments

In 2010 the Ministry of Education provided a document, Growing Success, Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools to all school boards. On page 28 of this document, the Ministry defines Assessment:

“Assessment is the process of gathering information that accurately reflects how well a student is progressing towards achievement of the curriculum expectations. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. Assessment for the purpose of improving students learning is seen as both “assessment for learning” and “assessment as learning”. As part of assessment for learning, teachers provide students with descriptive feedback and coaching for improvement. Teachers engage in assessment as learning by helping all students develop their capacity to be independent, autonomous learners who are able to set individual goals, monitor their own progress, determine next steps, and reflect on their thinking and learning.”

The Ministry document on assessment and evaluation, Growing Success (2010) also says:

“To ensure that assessment, evaluation, and reporting are valid and reliable, and that they lead to the improvement of learning for all students, Teachers use practices and procedures that:

* are fair, transparent, and equitable for all students;
* support all students, including those with special education needs, those who are learning the language of instruction (English or French), and those who are First Nation, Métis, or Inuit;
* are carefully planned to relate to the curriculum expectations and learning goals and, as much as possible, to the interests, learning styles and preferences, needs, and experiences of all students;
* are communicated clearly to students and parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year or course and at other appropriate points throughout the school year or course;
* are ongoing, varied in nature, and administered over a period of time to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning;
  + provide ongoing descriptive feedback that is clear, specific, meaningful, and timely to support improved learning and achievement;
  + develop students’ self-assessment skills to enable them to assess their own learning, set specific goals, and plan next steps for their learning.

Classroom teachers report progress to parents/guardians and students based on the achievement of goals that are either based on the expectations outlined in the Ontario Curriculum or a student’s individual goals in their Individual Education Plans.”

## Classroom Teachers

Effective assessment and instruction planning starts with knowing the students. To know their students and to plan focused assessment and instruction, teachers gather information about the students through observation, conversations and discussions with the students and parents/guardians, collection of student work samples, and other informal classroom oral and written assessments. Students are provided with multiple ways to demonstrate their learning. Through regular and ongoing dialogues with the parent/guardian and the student, teachers gain additional information to help them know their students.

Initial awareness of learning needs of students comes from a combination of teacher and parent/guardian observations. Such information is important in identifying appropriate modifications, accommodations and learning goals for the student’s classroom program. Awareness of learning styles, interests, attention span and triggers for frustration is enhanced through such collaboration.

In addition to classroom assessment by teachers, there are a number of more formalized assessments or processes that take place system-wide for students. Details for these assessments can be found in [Standard 4](#_Data_Collection) under the heading Data Collection.

In the primary years teachers collect assessment data for all students as follows:

Junior Kindergarten

* Early Learning Assessment (ELA)
* Teacher School Readiness Inventory (TSRI)

Senior Kindergarten

* ELA and TSRI (if not completed in Junior kindergarten)
* PM Benchmarks\* (if student is ready)

Grades One – Three

* PM Benchmarks\* (twice per year)

Grades Four – Eight (plus Grade 9 Applied English)

* DRA Reading Assessment

\*Standardized reading assessment tools

These instruments provide information on students along a developmental continuum. Data from these assessments is entered into a secure electronic data tracker, allowing information about the student to be accumulated over time.

## Screening for Giftedness

The Halton District School Board conducts two screening processes for giftedness each year. A gifted screening utilizing a nomination process occurs for students in the primary grades and a large scale written assessment occurs for all grade 4 students.

## Processes for Addressing Significant Student Learning Needs

The classroom teacher, and/or the parents/guardians, will be the first to realize that a student is not progressing well at school. It is the responsibility of Teachers to consult regularly with parents/guardians about the student’s progress. Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to discuss concerns they may have about their child’s progress with staff. In some cases, the student may have already mastered the grade level curriculum expectations. It is expected that Teachers will make the necessary accommodations and modifications to instruction and assessment to the student’s needs.

In cases where a student is unable to meet the expectations of the Ontario Curriculum despite a variety of classroom interventions, teachers may with the assistance of appropriate support staff develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to address the student’s learning needs. In other cases, a Behavior Intervention Plan might be required to help the student attain positive behaviors for success in the classroom and school environment.

As the professionals with first responsibility for addressing the learning needs of students assigned to their classroom, it is expected that teachers will routinely make adjustments to their classroom program. Such adjustments may include:

* Small-group, direct instruction for students who require pre-teaching or reinforcement of lessons taught
* The use of Assistive Technology, including computers and computer software programs
* The use of verbal/aural/kinesthetic strategies to engage all learners
* Varying the pace and timing of lessons to meet the attention span of learners
* The use of other in-school professionals, trained volunteers and co-operative education students to support students.

If a teacher is seeking advice from colleagues on strategies and resources that can be used to accommodate individual student needs, an in-school team is convened comprised of the principal and/or vice principal, SERT and classroom teacher(s). It is expected that parents/guardians will be aware that the teacher is seeking further advice and input and will share the outcome of such discussions with them. If a decision is made that it would be in the child’s interests to conduct diagnostic educational assessment by the Special Education Resource Teacher, the parents/guardians will be consulted and the results shared with them, including next steps for program support based on this data.

## Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs)

The school Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) can provide additional diagnostic information to assist with in-school programming decisions. The school SERT may use a variety of different informal screening, educational tests, and observational assessments, and assist with anecdotal recording forms. Special Education Resource Teachers do not use tests that are classified as psychological tests. Some of the tools commonly used by SERTs are:

* Key Math;
* Evaluation of work samples against the Ministry of Education exemplars;
* Classroom observations;
* WFAS (Wechsler Fundamentals: Academic Skills).

Should there be a need for further strategies and/or the belief that formal assessment data may be required to help determine the nature of such strategies, a referral to the School Resource Team should take place. This will be discussed ahead of time with parents/guardians, who will be strongly encouraged to attend and participate in the problem solving. The School Resource Team may recommend further educational assessment, psychological assessment, behavioral assessment, speech and language assessment, or support from appropriate outside agencies. The team may also review the results of assessments conducted by non-HDSB professionals. It may be determined that a student has a specific learning need and would benefit from the development of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) if one is not already in place. There may also be a recommendation to an IPRC for formal identification and placement. At all times, every effort will be made to ensure that decisions are made in the best interest of the student and with the full support and agreement of the parents/guardians.

## Case Conferences

In many instances a student is receiving support from individuals and agencies outside of the school system. This support may be in the form of professional assessments, programs of intervention, and therapeutic programs not available in the school setting. An effective strategy to bring all of the knowledge about a student together is a “case conference”; a meeting attended by parents/guardians, school personnel, and external agency personnel. The case conference permits the sharing of specific information about students to close any knowledge gaps and to understand strategies being utilized in working with the child and their family. The case conference also ensures that professionals are not duplicating services or working at cross-purposes. By sharing the programs and strategies being used, staff can more effectively align the work being done within their respective jurisdiction to support one another in better meeting the needs of the student.

## Specialized Assessments

Professional Support Services Personnel include Child and Youth Counselors, Speech-Language Pathologists, Psycho-Educational Consultants, Social Workers and ABA Facilitators. Their services are usually accessed through the School Resource Team (SRT) when the school problem-solving process requires additional support. Informed, signed parental/guardian consent (for a student under the age of 18) or student consent (for a student 18 years of age and older) will be obtained prior to such assessments occurring. The exception to this is a referral to School Social Workers. Secondary students do not require parental consent to access services from a Social Worker. Secondary students provide their own informed consent as per legislation, and are encouraged to include parents/guardians in the decision to involve the School Social Worker.

### Psycho-educational Consultants

Psycho-educational Consultants are either members of, or supervised by members of the College of Psychologists of Ontario and are subject to the Professional Standards of the College (and other HDSB administrative procedures). Psycho-educational Consultants assist schools, students and parents/guardians through the use of specialized tests and procedures to assess a student's academic, intellectual, and behavioral or social-emotional functioning. The Psycho-educational Consultant works as a collaborative partner with the school personnel and parents/guardians in the gathering of information and making suggestions and recommendations about instructional strategies and interventions.

As per the Education Act (Reg 298), it is the duty of the principal to “inform the student and parent/guardian of the student and obtain written permission prior to the test”, where it is proposed to administer a test of intelligence or personality. Following this, the psycho-educational consultant will obtain informed consent from the parent/guardian or student over the age of 18. Once an assessment or consultation has been completed, results will be shared with the parents/guardians and, with permission, school staff (e.g. principal, SERT, and classroom teacher). Sharing of such information takes place at meetings structured in accordance with the needs/wishes of the family. For example, an initial sharing may take place with the parents/guardians/student only, then a second session with school personnel involved such as at a School Resource Team meeting. Assessment results are also shared with the student, as appropriate.

A copy of the written report will be given or mailed to the parents/guardians/student and, with permission, will be filed in the student’s Ontario Student Record folder. The report may be withdrawn from the OSR at the written request of the parents/guardians to the School Principal. Please note that this is the decision of the Principal; if the document is deemed essential for programming purposes, the Principal may wish that it remain in the OSR. A copy of each report is kept in a secure file at the Regional Student Services Office (New Street Education Centre or North IPRC Office) and is maintained as per the standards of the College of Psychologists of Ontario and current privacy legislations.

Should the results involve the communication of a psychological diagnosis (such as a learning disability); the diagnosis will be communicated by a member of the College of Psychologists as per the Regulated Health Professions Act. This Act states that only regulated professionals within the psychological and medical communities can communicate certain diagnoses legally in Ontario.

### Speech-Language Pathologists

Speech-Language Pathologists are subject to the Professional Standards of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario. Speech-Language Pathologists have achieved a Master’s degree and are members of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.

Speech-Language Pathologists evaluate a wide range of communication abilities in a child. Referrals are received from the School Resource Team (SRT). A complete assessment may include a variety of standardized tests and procedures such as conversational sampling. Areas of evaluation may include: Receptive and expressive language, linguistic/vocabulary awareness, literacy development, social communication,, articulation, voice, fluency, and resonance. For students who are emergent communicators, areas of evaluation may include joint attention, communication functions and communication modalities.

The Speech-Language Pathologist will obtain informed consent from the parents/guardians. Once the assessment has been completed, results will be shared with the parents/guardians and the school. A copy of the report will be filed in the student’s Ontario Student Record (OSR) and is available to the parents/guardians. The report may be withdrawn from the OSR at the written request of the parents/guardians to the principal. A copy of each report is kept in a secure file at the Regional Student Services Office (New Street Education Centre or North IPRC Office) and is maintained as per the standards of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario and current privacy legislations. Following an assessment, the Speech-Language Pathologist may consult with teachers and parents/guardians regarding appropriate programming strategies and/or assist with the application to CCAC for speech concerns (articulation, voice, fluency).

### School Social Workers

School Social Workers are subject to the Professional Standards of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. School Social Workers have achieved a Master’s Degree of Social Work (MSW) and are members (RSW) of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers.

School Social Workers provide individual and family support related to the social-emotional functioning of a student. They work as collaborative members of the school community to contribute to the success of students when interpersonal and/or social needs (i.e. food, housing and income security) are negatively affecting students’ functioning at school. School Social Workers receive referrals from the School Resource Team, school administration and secondary students.

Informed parental/guardian consent is obtained for involvement of the School Social Worker with elementary students. Informed consent is obtained for the involvement of the School Social Worker with secondary students. Assessment services include data gathering from staff, family, students and community agencies to assess students’ strength, supports and current concerns.

School Social Workers are also provincially mandated Attendance Counselors who investigate, assess and provide recommendations for students who are habitually absent from school. School staff, parents/guardians and students themselves are included in the assessment process. School Social Workers may, as part of their assessment process, use the School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS) child and parent/guardian version. Once an assessment is completed, School Social Workers share information with parents/guardians and school staff, as appropriate.

### Child and Youth Counselors (CYCs)

CYCs in the Halton District School Board have post-secondary training at the College or University (BA) level. CYCs require a Child and Youth Worker Diploma.

CYCs work as a collaborative member of the school community to proactively support students and/or support skill development when behavioural and/or social-emotional needs are negatively impacting students’ functioning at school. CYCs may provide specific whole class programs/services such as Roots of Empathy, bullying prevention, restorative circles. Assessment services include classroom observation, initiation and analysis of behaviour logs and behavioural assessments. CYC’s frequently are involved in the development of behaviour and safety plans. CYCs also refer and collaborate with community agencies and providers. CYCs provide this support whether assigned to a school, Behaviour Resource Class, Multi-Disciplinary Support Team, Gary Allan programs or PROPS classroom.

Requests for CYC services are generated through the School Resource Team. Informed parental/guardian consent for students under the age of 18 is obtained for involvement of the CYC when they are providing individual or small group support.

### Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Facilitators

ABA Facilitators have a masters degree and training in Applied Behaviour Analysis. BCBA Certification is preferred and encouraged.

ABA Facilitators provide a functional behavioural analysis for students with developmental delays, Autism Spectrum Disorder and complex behavioural profiles. Their assessments include behaviour tracking, direct observation of students and information gathering from staff, agency personnel or private practitioners. A referral and parent consent is required.

ABA Facilitators also provide assessment and support to students who are involved in the “Seamless Transition Connections” process. For cases outside of the Connections process requests are made to the Senior Manager via the school Principal upon recommendation of the School Resource Team. The ABA Facilitator obtains informed consent from the parent/guardian.

## Dispositions of Assessments and Reports

Active ABA, CYC, Multi-disciplinary Support Team, Psychology, Speech language and Social Work files are securely stored in locked filing cabinets in the employees’ office space. Once closed, these files are stored in locked filing cabinets in a secured storage room at the New Street Education Centre or North IPRC office. Procedures are in place for the safe and secure management of files in cases of an employee’s retirement, resignation or illness.

Student files, from ABA, CYC, MDST, Psychology, Speech Language and Social work are retained until the students turns 31 years of age, and then the files are securely shredded. The Principal is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the student’s Ontario Student Record (OSR), which contains all information pertinent to a particular student. The OSR is stored in the office at the school where the student is registered. Upon retirement from the Halton District School Board an OSR will be sent to another school board within the province of Ontario when a copy of the Ministry’s approved OSR requisition form, signed by the Principal of the student’s new school, is received. When a student leaves the province of Ontario or graduates from a secondary school, storage of the OSR is governed in accordance with the Education Act and relevant privacy legislation. Access to the OSR is governed under the Education Act and Halton District School Board Policy/Procedure.

## Assessments conducted outside of the Halton District School Board

There are no consistent standards for criteria for identification as a student with special needs in the Province of Ontario. Since each school board is left to determine its own criteria (based on Ministry of Education categories of exceptionalities), the Halton District School Board does not automatically recognize previous identifications and placements held by students. Professional Services staff review such assessments, with parental/guardian consent, in order to make a determination at a School Resource Team regarding recommendations for identification and placement of a student.

Information about external speech language and/or psychological assessments of students is normally shared through the School Resource Team process. Halton District School Board staff will review the information shared to determine whether it matches our criteria for identification. If so, the information is used in the process of determining how best to meet the student’s needs.

Assessments undertaken by qualified medical practitioners in the province of Ontario are also recognized and considered on a student specific basis in conjunction with psycho-educational assessments where required.

## Wait Times for Specialized Assessments

Referrals for specialized assessments take place through the School Resource Team and are recorded in the minutes of the SRT meeting. Members of the School Resource Team will help to identify the urgency of the need for assessment and will help the Psycho-educational Consultant, Speech-Language Pathologist, School Social Worker or Child and Youth Counselor to prioritize their caseload within the school.

Each staff member to whom a referral is made tracks the date on which a referral has been made and when the assessment has been completed (i.e. when at least a verbal report has been presented on the assessment results). As staff will typically be assigned to more than one school, they will exercise professional discretion in prioritizing case loads from school to school. Generally speaking, a student in some degree of crisis who requires immediate assessment will be seen within days. The “most urgent” request for assessment in one school may be a lower priority than others in another school. Where the staff member needs guidance in prioritizing their caseload, the Senior Manager is available for consultation. Assessments are prioritized on factors including:

* Whether the referral is for an initial or repeat assessment, with emphasis generally given to initial assessments;
* Degree of observed student need or difficulty;
* Set timelines for specific types of assessments/screening (i.e. grade 4 gifted screening).

To minimize wait times to as great an extent as possible, the Halton District School Board:

* Hires HDSB staff on an “overtime” basis to conduct psychological and speech-language assessments on weekends and during vacation periods, such as the March Break and during the summer months;
* Where necessary, contracts with outside agencies and private practitioners for psychological and speech- language assessments at times of peak need and as resources allow.

Wait times for psycho-educational and speech-language assessments may vary. Psycho-educational assessment wait times average is 1 year. Speech-Language Pathology assessment wait times average 8 months.

## Assessment Requirements for Post-Secondary

Students with recognized disabilities, seeking accommodations at post-secondary institution will require appropriate diagnostic documentation. For students with learning disabilities, many institutions require an updated diagnosis. Parents/guardians and older students are strongly encouraged to research the specific requirements of potential destinations as criteria do vary. Information updating diagnoses for post-secondary education is available from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Students with developmental disabilities who need to access services and supports through Developmental Services Ontario must have a developmental disability as defined within the Services and Supports to promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act (2008).

| **Category of Assessment** | **Name of Assessment Tool** | **Category of Staff Who Use This Tool** | **Professional Qualification and/or Certification of Staff** | **Governing Legislation** | **Wait Time for Assessment** | **Disposition of Test Results** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Educational Assessments | Curriculum-based assessments  Performance observation | Classroom Teachers | Ontario College of Teacher Certification | The Education Act | Conducted routinely | Used in formative and summative assessment for reporting to parents/guardians and students |
|  | Curriculum-based assessments  Performance observation | * Special Education Teachers * Special Education Resource Teachers * Self-Contained Class Teachers * Coordinators * Learning Resource Teachers | Ontario College of Teacher Certification  Special Education Additional Qualifications | The Education Act | Conducted routinely, often as part of the SRT process | Used in formative and summative assessment for reporting to parents/guardians and students. May be stored by Special Education Resource Teacher or as part of SRT minutes |
| Psychoeducational Assessments | * WISC-IV * WIAT-2 * WRAML * BASC * Vineland | * Psychoeducational Consultants * Psychologists * Supervisors | College of Psychologists of Ontario Certification | * The Education Act * Regulated Health Professions Act * Personal Health Information Privacy Act | Average Wait Time is 1 year | OSR, with parental permission  Regional Student Services Office (New Street) |
| Speech-Language Assessments | * CELF-5 * CELF-P2 * PLS-5 * Fluharty-2 * CASL | Speech Language - Pathologists | College of Audiologists and Speech Language - Pathologists of Ontario | * The Education Act * Regulated Health Professions Act * Personal Health Information Privacy Act | Average Wait Time is 8 months | OSR  Regional Student Services Office (New Street) |
|  | Observations | School Social Workers | College of Social Workers and Social Services Workers | * The Education Act * Personal Health Information Privacy Act |  | Social Worker’s school-based records |
|  | Observations | Child and Youth Counsellors | Supervised by members of the College of Psychologists | The Education Act |  | CYC’s school-based records or Regional Student Services Office (New Street) |