

Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

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Practical Learning Program

The Practical Learning Program (PLP) provides intensive support while teaching and reinforcing essential skills that foster independence in activities of daily living. The program includes school and community-based opportunities for learning including workplace readiness skills. Each student's program is individualized for their unique pathway based on strengths, interests, and program support needs.

Practical Learning Program classes, in accordance with the Education Act s.181/98, have a maximum of ten students. This program is suited for students who may have intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, and/or autism.

Currently in the DDSB, 845 students access learning and support through 93 Practical Learning Program classes (42 Elementary and 51 Secondary).

Program Focus

The Practical Learning Program provides intensive support while teaching and reinforcing essential skills that foster independence in activities of daily living.

- Development of communication skills;
- Functional literacy and numeracy skills (Ontario Curriculum Expectations or alternative expectations with a focus on functional reading, writing and mathematics skills);
- Life Management Skills (self-regulation, advocacy, self-awareness);
- Independent living skills (grocery shopping, cooking, community engagement, vocational skills);
- Work education opportunities which may be in-school or in-community experiences;
- Healthy Living Skills (physical health and safety, social skills and relationships);
- Integrated transition planning from year to year, particularly from secondary to post-secondary.



"We learn that it's important to get fresh air and that walking helps your mood."

"We learn to stick up for ourselves and others."

"It's like a second home and a second family."

"We learn to cook and do laundry."

"I like that you give me independence in the kitchen."
—Student quotes

Families and Caregivers

Families and caregivers are an essential part of the planning for student learning and well-being.

"The best decision I have ever made for my child's education was to join the Practical Learning Program (PLP). The educators in the program believe our children to be capable and have much to offer our society. When you start with this mindset you can only have positive growth, in all areas of development. The community that they build for our children not only within the PLP program but throughout the school community is truly inspiring. I see my child blossoming daily. I couldn't be more thankful."

-Parent



The Classroom Team

Each Practical Learning Program team is based on a foundation of one teacher and two Educational Assistants. Additional support may be in place including support from community partnerships such as GrandviewKids and provision of School Based Rehabilitative Services (Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy supports). DDSB Inclusive Student Services team members are part of the classroom team supports and, through consent, are involved in the planning for individual students.

"The students in our Practical Learning Program classroom are a meaningful part of all the things that happen around them. They come into the classroom and know what they have to do because their schedule is in front of them. They know that they are a part of our community and are important to us... By the time they graduate, they have established a group of friends around them, they demonstrate confidence by sharing information to the class in whatever form they use to communicate and they feel valued."

-Teacher

"In our Practical Learning Program classroom, students feel safe and comfortable to express themselves in whatever way they are able. In our classroom, a student who communicates with an iPad, modeled for another student how to say hello. He also had her repeat his name. He then followed up with, "Do you like to build sandcastles? The fact that we can target communication as a specific goal and spend quality time teaching communication to the students means that they will be able to use the skills and have a voice throughout their life".

-Team Member

The Practical Learning Program—Classroom Environment

The environment within each Practical Learning Program classroom is designed to meet the diverse strengths and needs of students. Spaces and resources include, but are not limited to:

- Literacy and numeracy resources of high interest meeting students at their individual skills levels for growth;
- Access to a kitchenette for the development of meal preparation and clean up skills. Most programs utilize convection microwaves and are equipped with dishwashers to parallel equipment available through adult support programs;
- Access to laundry facilities;
- Sensory and/or multi-modal rooms available to students as a proactive means to promote self-regulation to assist students with sensory activities that promote their wellness and a return to their classroom learning.



"In our Practical Learning Program classroom, we practice self-regulation strategies daily. We have bean bag chairs, a tent, and rocking chairs to teach students different strategies to regulate."

—Teacher



For more information about the
DDSB Inclusive Student Services Impact Update,
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