

Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

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Developmental Program

The Developmental Program is a special education placement supporting students' individualized growth and development in the following areas: Communication, Sensory Skills, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Social Skills, and Personal Development Skills. The program includes school and community-based opportunities for social integration. Each student's program is individualized for their strengths, interests, and program support needs.

Students accessing programming through Developmental Programs have significant physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities. Students may also be medically fragile and/or require significant sensory support.

Developmental classes, in accordance with the Education Act s.181/98, have a maximum of six students. Currently in the DDSB, 109 students access learning and support through 22 Developmental Program classes (13 Elementary and 9 Secondary).

"Never underestimate our students. They will amaze you!"

—Special Education Head and experienced Teacher in the Developmental Program

Families and Caregivers

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

"Being part of the Developmental Class has been an amazing experience for our son. His team is supportive, imaginative, caring and energetic. Thought and care goes into his IEP to ensure maximum success in his daily activities and tasks. He has grown tremendously because of the individualized program that has been set for him. He comes off the bus each day with a huge smile and we know it's been a great day at school. We are so thankful for the school team."

—Parent



"The Development Program was life changing for my daughter. The level of care and attention she receives is second to none. It has helped nurture her learning in so many great ways. Without this program my daughter would not be pulling herself up to a standing position. We cannot thank Educational Assistants and teachers enough. School would not be a viable option for my daughter without this program. Thank you all for your amazing work."

—Parent

The Classroom Team

Each Developmental Program class team is comprised of a Teacher, minimum of two Educational Assistants and includes integrated community supports embedded within programming. Community partners commonly include: nursing care, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists from organizations such as Grandview Kids through School Based Rehabilitation Services.

DDSB Inclusive Student Services team members are part of the classroom team supports and, through consent, are involved in the planning for individual students (Facilitator, Speech Language Pathologists, Social Workers, Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Teachers of the Blind or Low Vision or Psychological Services team members). Classroom teams may also be supported by consultation with a student's community health team.



"As an educator, I find the greatest joy in working with students with developmental strengths and support needs. Our daily routine revolves around helping them achieve their physiotherapy and occupational goals, using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), various computer technologies, and engaging in sensory exploration. Typically, our students arrive at school with enthusiasm, ready to collaborate with our team. Witnessing their smiles... is incredibly rewarding. We approach our role with a deep sense of care, treating these students as if they were our own children. It's more than just teaching; it's a genuine partnership between families and educators, where everyone works together to support the growth and well-being of these wonderful students."

—Teacher, Developmental Program

The Developmental Classroom Environment

The environment within each Developmental Program classroom is designed to meet the diverse strengths and needs of students.

Accessibility and inclusion are district commitments in the DDSB. For example, in many Developmental Program class spaces, students and staff use accessible and adjustable tables built by the DDSB Facilities Services team. The tables were designed including purposeful indentations to allow students using mobility aids (wheelchairs and standers) to participate in activities such as cooking and arts.

Spaces and resources include, but are not limited to:

- Visual supports (large screens, light box, high contrast manipulatives)
- Hearing supports (sound fields, microphones, speakers, hush ups on chairs)
- Movement spaces (ball pit, trampoline, swing, etc.)
- Specialized seats, pea pods, therapy trikes, standers and/or walkers
- Visually sensitive walls (decreased complexity), sensitivity lighting and sensory activities
- Lifts, slings, mats, wedges, and bolsters for physical therapy, naps, and playtime
- Change tables, accessibility in washrooms such as grab bars
- Kitchenette and laundry facilities

The Power of Technology

A switch is an assistive technology device commonly used by students including many in Developmental Programs. A switch can be used to operate computer software, devices, battery toys and communication devices. Students may use a switch to make choices or answer yes/no questions, turn sensory equipment and lights off and on, or read parts of a book independently. Switches can also be used to play multiple recorded messages allowing for communication and participation. Switches come in a variety of shapes and sizes and can be operated by almost any body part.

"Are you happy or sad in our classroom?"

The student responded to the question by activating the "happy" button on the 3 choice switch.

**For more information about the
DDSB Inclusive Student Services Impact Update,
please visit [DDSB Inclusive Student Services](#).**

