

Special Education Handbook for Parents

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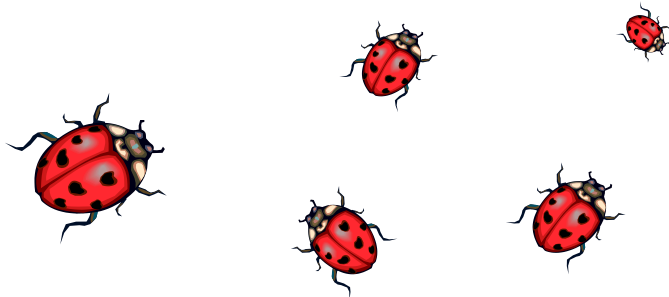
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Introduction

Horizon School Division No. 67 prepares students for the future, with an emphasis on lifelong learning, whereby all students excel through stimulating and challenging educational experiences.

The Alberta School Act (2000), Section 13, mandates that all children between the ages of six and sixteen as of September 1st in a year, regardless of need and ability, are required to attend school. The Alberta School Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, support the school, the community and society, in changing attitudes and practices toward students with disabilities.

Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, guarantees to every individual, equality before and under the law, and equal protection and equal benefit of the law, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disabilities. Furthermore, reference to the principles of fundamental justice include procedural fairness and requires that safeguards be in place, protecting students with special needs and ensuring that they are provided with an appropriate education.

We focus our attention on supporting all students in inclusive schools where children are members of the classroom, and where staff and students are mindful and attentive of their differences. This is achieved by creating safe and caring classrooms, staffed with “the brightest and the best” personnel and with the resources necessary for every child to learn.

Students, parents and staff envision the classroom as an inclusive community; a community whereby everyone belongs, where the needs of all members are met emotionally, physically, socially, academically, and where each member cares about and supports the other.



Beliefs and Practices

The Special Education policies and practices of Horizon School Division No. 67 reflect the following beliefs and practices:

- All children are valued.
- All children can learn.
- All children’s rights are considered when programming educationally.
- All children are placed in age appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood school.
- All children are given opportunities to be participating members of a regular classroom and all other aspects of school life.
- Programs shall consider all aspects of a child's development (academic, physical, social and emotional).
- Programs are modified or adapted to meet the needs of the child.

- Program support is provided as determined by the child's needs.
- Inclusion works best when supported by the school community.
- A Team Approach works best.

Inclusive Education



Inclusive educational programs offered in Horizon School Division are supported by Alberta Education Special Education Policy 1.6.1; “The placement of students with special needs in regular school programs is based on a philosophy of equality, sharing, participation and the worth and dignity of individuals.... Educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in neighborhood or local schools shall be the first placement option considered by school boards.” The purpose of educating all students in an inclusive environment is to provide each student with the opportunity to learn, to live and to work with his or her peers in natural educational and community settings. The rationale for this philosophy includes:

1. When provided appropriate educational programs and supports in inclusive settings, all students learn more than they do in segregated settings.
2. The effects of an inclusive program (academic learning, self-confidence, motivation, and positive expectations for achievement) are realized.
3. Entire school populations benefit from inclusive schooling and grow from the experience and interaction.

To ensure the education of regular students and students with special needs is not adversely affected while supporting the principle of inclusion, Horizon School Division No. 67 supports the considerations for inclusive practices outlined in the Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Special Education (January, 1997). The critical factors necessary to support successful inclusion in schools, as identified in the report, are:

- Adequate physical resources
- Adequate human resources
- Parental involvement
- Formal communication systems about integration, for parents and teachers
- Students with special needs prepared for integration
- Regular students prepared for integration
- Principal support/involvement
- Life skills programming at high school level
- Training for the classroom teacher
- Teacher support and involvement
- Written policy/mission statement and guidelines (at jurisdiction and school levels)
- Support from teachers trained in special education
- Classroom teachers responsible for Individual Program Plans (IPPs)
- Short and long term planning time for inclusion



Special Education Three Year Plan

Meeting the needs of all children in Horizon School Division No. 67 is a priority of the Board and its employees. The Board commits funding support to the students with special needs, their programs and enhances the educational support and opportunities for all children.

Goals for Special Education



- 1. To ensure that students with special needs achieve their maximum potential in areas of academic, social & emotional, and physical growth, as outlined in the IPP.**

Strategies:

- ensure that IPPs are completed (outlining student goals, objectives, strategies, resources and evaluation methods) and reviewed on an ongoing basis
- ensure teachers are given support they need to complete and implement the IPPs
- encourage special provisions on achievement tests to ensure the greatest amount of student success
- ensure access to enrichment programming and/or the development of 'special' projects for students who are gifted and talented
- encourage teachers to promote opportunities for community participation that complement the IPP goals

Outcomes:

- students with special needs meet their Individual Program Plan goals
- teachers encourage and support students with special needs to participate in school related activities/events (eg. School dances, intramurals/house leagues, clubs, Green Certificate Programs, special work place experience)

Measures:

- percentage of parents of children with special needs who are satisfied with the program designed for their child
- percentage of classroom teachers who are satisfied that the students with special needs experience success according to their IPP
- percentage of high school students with special needs who graduate (certificate or diploma)

2. To ensure that students with special needs have access to and are provided with, the necessary services and resources to successfully achieve the educational goals of their individualized program plans (IPPs).

Strategies:

- ensure cooperation with agencies and other professionals to develop the best programs possible
- continue to be involved with the Student Health Project
- ensure adequate supply budgets for schools
- share information regarding resources at monthly CST meetings
- annually 'revitalize' the resource and technology inventories located on the Horizon Web site
- ensure health and education partners have information for providing services through scheduled meetings (SLA hours, SLA assignments, CST names and assigned schools, SLP names and assigned schools/programs, case load information, school schedules and SLP schedules, etc.)

Outcomes:

- students with special needs will have access to the services and the resources they need



Measures:

- percentage of parents and teachers who are satisfied with the access of services for their child
- percentage of teachers who are satisfied that the students have the supplies and resources they need
- percentage of teachers and parents who are satisfied with the coordination of services

3. To encourage active and meaningful parental involvement/consultation relative to programming for their child(ren) with special needs.

Strategies:

- ensure parents are aware of their child's level of performance relative to their IPP goals
- encourage and expect parents and students (as appropriate) to participate at IPP meetings and ensure they know the value of their input and support
- be empathetic to the family situations/circumstances
- ensure ongoing communication with the parents
- provide information and /or opportunities, when appropriate, for in-service and resources to the parents relative to the special needs of their child(ren)
- provide information to parents on the division's special education program (Brochure available)
- promote and encourage parents to provide opportunities for their child(ren)'s participation in community activities/events that complement the IPP goals

Outcomes:

- parents of children with special needs cooperate with schools to ensure optimum success for their children, as outlined in the IPP
- students with special needs are included in social and recreational activities/events in the community (eg. Clubs, choral groups, judo, Cubs, swimming, special work place experience)

Measures:

- percentage of parents who are satisfied with their involvement with the development of their child's IPP

4. a) To ensure that students with special needs have access to regular school wide technology and to the technologies specific to their individual abilities/disabilities.

Strategies:

- assess the technology needs of students with special needs
- secure technology resources specific to student needs (school sharing and resource sharing)
- keep technology inventory for division

Outcomes:

- students will have access to the technology they need to achieve the goals as outlined on their IPP

Measures:

- percentage of students utilizing technology, as outlined in their IPP

b) To ensure availability and access of appropriate technology for educational staff to increase efficiency in the delivery of Special Education.

Strategies:

- in-service and implementation of current/updated technology tools and resources, as required
- educational staff will work with technology staff to ensure access and/or acquisition of technological equipment

Outcomes:

- educational staff will have access to technology to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of student programming

Measures:

- percentage of classroom support teachers who are satisfied with the level of technology provided

5. Every student will be included as much as possible in the regular classroom to maximize student achievement, learning and socialization.

Strategies:

- teachers develop programs for students with special needs that are appropriate to the learning abilities of the students and fit with the regular classroom placement
- teachers ensure a daily plan that supports the IPP

Outcomes:

- students with special needs are provided inclusive programs within the regular classroom with appropriate modifications and/or adaptations

Measures:

- percentage of time that students with special needs are included in the regular classroom

6. To ensure access to the best trained personnel to oversee the administration, delivery and implementation of special needs programs for students with special needs.

Strategies:

- continue to provide professional development opportunities to school staff
- continue to encourage sharing of resources, knowledge and skills
- continue to have meaningful classroom support teacher meetings
- encourage assistants to acquire 'Teacher Assistant Training' and/or relevant professional development
- provide a list of special education professional development opportunities that can be provided "in house"

Outcomes:

- students with special needs have the best and most qualified staff affecting their programs

Measures:

- annual report (to the Board) on the: a) budgeted and expended dollars in professional development for special education and b) number of personnel who have accessed professional development opportunities
- percentage of classroom teachers and CSTs satisfied with access to professional development opportunities

7. To ensure and acknowledge the continued support for special education programs amongst school-based team members.

Strategies:

- ensure awareness of all school staff of student's IPP and ensure participation in the IPP meetings
- provide time to communicate regarding students and programs
- when hiring new school staff, consider personnel profiles that are supportive of students with special needs,
- consider including a classroom support teacher or Special Education Supervisor in creating profiles and/or interviewing
- ensure adequate time and space for classroom support teachers to carry out their roles and responsibilities
- include special education as a topic for staff meetings
- ensure awareness annually of roles and responsibilities of personnel as outlined in the Student Services Handbook (ie. Regular classroom teacher, principals, etc.)
- include the Student Services Supervisor as needed for support at the school level

Outcomes:

- division wide and school wide support for students with special needs
- effective special education programs
- team members support special education programs
- empower people to excel
- clarification of special education practices

Measures:

- percentage of administrators satisfied with the special education program in their school
- percentage of CSTs/Administrators who are satisfied with the involvement/participation of the classroom teachers in the development of the IPP
- percentage of CSTs/Administrators who are satisfied with the involvement/participation of the classroom teachers in the implementation of the IPP

Horizon School Division No. 67 supports the students with special needs with a visionary inclusive model of program delivery.

**It takes a village to raise a child
(African Proverb)**



Collaboration

Inclusion of students with special needs works best when those who interact with the student work in collaboration. This involves working as a team to gather information, to develop and implement an appropriate program plan, to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and to make recommendations for future programs.

Although the Board is ultimately responsible for a student's program, it is those who are actively involved with the students who are most able to ensure program quality.

In order for a team to be effective:

- Goals are clearly defined
- Roles and responsibilities are delineated
- Members are valued
- Members encourage one another
- Communication is regular and ongoing
- Consensus is the preferred method of decision-making

The benefits of a collaborative integrated model of support services include:

- Enhanced self esteem.
- Promotion of generalization and transfer of learning.
- Sharing and learning of new skills from the different team members.
- Increased opportunities to use a preventative approach.
- Meeting the challenges of learning and providing new technology in an effective manner.
- Providing for adequate resources and support.
- Enter into an equal partnership, based on high moral and ethical standards.
- Employ complementary expertise, resulting in more creative and comprehensive solutions.
- Classroom support teachers and classroom teachers work together as an informal and immediately available problem-solving team.

All team members share common values and beliefs and ensure a safe and caring environment for the students:

Values and Beliefs

- Appreciating individual differences
- Believing and understanding that all students can learn
- Understanding the importance of respecting students' human dignity
- Establishing mutual respect with all students
- Recognizing and acting according to professional standards of conduct

Environment

- Providing an effective environment for student learning
- Maintaining an inclusive learning environment (all students feel physically, psychologically, socially, academically and culturally secure)

School-Based TEAM

The school-based TEAM offers a support network for students with special needs to ensure that students are successful. They:

- include the students (when appropriate), classroom teachers, parent/guardians, classroom support teachers, administrators, peers, and assistants
- interact with students with special needs on a daily basis
- regularly review the IPP.

Your educational team members include::

Superintendent
Director of Student Services
Special Education Supervisor
School Administrator
Classroom Support Teacher
Classroom Teacher
Assistant
Parent/Guardian



Parents/Guardians

For children to succeed, parents/guardians must be actively and positively involved in the education of their children. Parents/guardians are the most valuable source of support and information for their children and they have the greatest investment in their children's futures. Schools facilitate positive, meaningful involvement with parents through:

- Making school inviting
- Avoiding educational jargon
- Being flexible in scheduling meetings
- Showing respect for parents'/guardians' perspectives
- Keeping parents well informed
- Encouraging two way communication
- Celebrating parent participation

Alberta Education's policy requires that the parents/guardians be consulted and participate in decision-making in all aspects of procedure in the selection, placement, and programming of the student's education. Further, the Alberta School Act and Alberta Education have clarified the role of parents/guardians in Special Education.

- Parents/guardians develop a supportive relationship with the school

- Parents/guardians provide a model of acceptance and understanding for their children with special needs
- Parents/guardians are included as participating members of the school-based TEAM
- Parents/guardians have the opportunity to contribute to planning development and implementation of the child's program
- Parents/guardians are invited to share information regarding previous and existing supports and services offered to their child
- Parents/guardians provide informed consent for assessment and programming
- Parents/guardians are given the opportunity to meet and receive information from qualified individuals who conduct assessments
- Parents/guardians are given opportunities to communicate and review their child's program with the school-based TEAM, consultants and other service providers
- Parents/guardians are invited, as appropriate, to access training and/or learning opportunities about their child
- Parents/guardians are key members of the TEAM in the development of the Individual Program Plan (IPP)

Expanded TEAM

The expanded TEAM interacts with the school-based TEAM for specific purposes. Depending on the needs of the student, it may include the Special Education Supervisor, Family-school Liaison Counsellors, Native Liaison Counsellor, Kanadier Liaison Counsellor, consultants, and supporting agencies.

If a member of the School-based or Expanded TEAM finds fault or criticism with the performance of another member of the TEAM, that person will communicate, in confidence, the concern(s) and try to resolve the manner at that level. Should they need to take the concern(s) further, they would speak with their appropriate supervisor to determine future resolution.

Coordination of Services

We all share a responsibility in educating our children.
 For students with special needs, support comes in many forms.



<p>Students Parents/guardians Families</p>

Educational Services

- Classroom Teachers
- Classroom Support Teachers
- Assistants
- Peers
- Principals
- Family School Liaison Counsellors
- Native Liaison Counsellor
- Special Education Supervisor
- Resource Officer
- REACH Specialists
- Material Resource Center
- Chartered Psychologists
- Bus Drivers
- Children and Youth with Complex Needs Living
- Downtown LA Program
- University of Lethbridge

Health Services

- Chinook Health Region (CHR)
CARE Services
- CHR Alberta Mental Health
- Family Physicians
- Pediatricians
- CAMP Program
- Audiologist
- Health Units
- Alberta Children’s Hospital
- Ophthalmologists
Psychiatrists
- Chinook Student Health
- Westview Student Health

Community Services

- Handicapped Riding Assn.
- Day Care
- Volunteers
- Probation Officers
- Private Counsellors
- CNIB – Canadian Institute for the Blind
- Taber Special Needs
- Local Businesses
- RCMP – Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Media
- Local Police
- PDD - Persons with Developmental Disabilities
- AISCH
- AADL-Aids to Daily
- Quest
- Peaks
- Resources for children with disabilities
- Service clubs (ie Lions)
- Southwest Alberta Child and Family Services



Educational Programming

In the provision of high quality special education programs for students with special needs, Horizon School Division No. 67 is committed to the following principles:

Lifelong Learning: Students with special needs are lifelong learners. ‘Learning’ is defined by the abilities and needs of the individual student.

Equity: Students are provided with appropriate educational opportunities in supportive environments to ensure they are learning to their individual abilities.

Inclusion: Students with special needs in the regular classroom, in their neighborhood schools is the preferred placement option. Students with special needs are entitled to participate in the regular curriculum to the fullest extent possible.

Individual Programming: Adaptations, accommodations or modifications are provided to meet the individual student’s learning needs.

Effective Transitions: Transition plans are put in place to ensure that students with special needs successfully make transition changes (ie. school entry, between grades/classes/schools, to post-secondary education or world of work).

Parent Involvement: Students are more successful when their parent(s)/guardian(s) are involved in developing their child’s educational plan and actively participate in their child’s learning.

Team Delivery: School staff work together to create a network to support and ensure maximized student learning.

Coordination: The school team works with other agencies and service providers to ensure student success.

Confidentiality: Schools ensure that complete confidentiality of records (of which the IPP is part) is maintained in concert with Freedom of Information and Privacy legislation.

“Students with special needs are entitled to have access in a school year to an education program in accordance with the School Act,” (Alberta Education, Standards for Special Education, 2004). Further, “school authorities are required to provide special education programs based on Individualized Program Plans (IPPs) designed to meet the education needs of identifies exceptional students” (Alberta Education , 1997)

In Horizon School Division No. 67, expectations and processes for a student with special needs to access a special education program are organized into the following key areas:

- Identification
- Alberta Education Criteria and Codes
- Supports and Services
- Types of Program Development
- Individual Program Plan (IPP)

- IPP Program Reviews
- Transition Planning



Individualized Program Plan (IPP)

“Educational programs and services are designed around the assessed needs of the student and provided by qualified staff who are knowledgeable and skilled” (Standards for Special Education, 2004, p. 2).

If a student is identified as requiring curricular and program adaptations or modifications, an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) must be developed by a team.

The IPP is a written commitment of intent by an educational team to ensure the provision of appropriate programming for students with special needs. It is a plan of action developed through a TEAM approach involving parents, teachers, classroom support teachers, administrators and other professionals working with the student. It is designed as a working document to address the special needs of students and is based on diagnostic information which provides the basis for intervention strategies. Alberta Education requires that the IPP includes the following essential information:

- student's name, birth date, age, name of school, classroom teacher, classroom support teacher, assistants (if appropriate), medical information and personnel involved
- the projected date for initiation and anticipated duration of services
- a statement of the present levels of educational performance of the student, including areas of strength and areas of need
- assessments indicating current levels of performance and achievement
- annual long-term goals
- short-term instructional objectives (in addition to the basic academic and life skills objectives, psychomotor objectives are also considered)
- classroom accommodations and program considerations
- teaching strategies, methods, resources and activities
- specific educational services/strategies to be provided
- an appropriate evaluation procedure for determining whether the goals and objectives are being achieved
- the signatures and ‘position’ of each TEAM member.

Individual Program Plan (IPP) Reviews

The IPP meeting serves as an avenue to review the student's program. It acts as a communication vehicle between parents and the school personnel and enables them, to jointly review the student's needs, provisions, anticipated outcomes, and evaluation of progress.

It also serves as the primary avenue for resolving any differences between the parents and the school. Parent/guardian concerns about the IPP (ie. refusal to provide consent) should be documented on the IPP. The way in which the concerns are addressed and resolved should also be documented on the IPP (ie. Parent refused to consent to release of information with the support worker. The TEAM requested that the decision be reviewed in three months if necessary).

Alberta Education mandates that the IPPs for all students with special needs be reviewed at least three times throughout the year. To support Horizon School Division teachers in meeting this mandate, funding is budgeted within the special education budget to provide time and support for the school-based TEAM to meet.



Appeals



The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms embodied in the Canadian Constitution makes reference to the provision of educational services. Section 15 of the Charter guarantees to everyone equality before and under the law, and equal protection and benefit of the law. Furthermore, reference to the principles of fundamental justice include procedural fairness and requires that procedural safeguards be in place, protecting students with special needs and ensuring that they are provided with an appropriate education guided by principles of Human Rights and Freedoms.

The School Act provides that parents have the right to formally appeal decisions of an employee of the board that significantly affect the education of their child. Every reasonable effort should be made to resolve the concerns collaboratively with parents at the school level and then, if needed, at the jurisdiction level. Horizon School Division Policy IFH, Appeals, outlines the procedures to appeal decisions to the board. The appeal process ensures fair, just and timely resolution to a dispute.

Parents cannot ‘appeal’ to the Minister of Education. However, if they have appealed to the Board and they are not satisfied with the Board’s decision, then parents have the right to request a ‘Review’ of the Board’s decision by the Minister. A Review is an independent examination of a dispute between the two parties that has not been resolved. If the Minister determines that the matter will be reviewed, then the Minister determines if the Board’s decision was reasonable and appropriate.

The parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be notified and/or encouraged to attend discussions regarding changes in the IPP. Parents will be made aware of their right to appeal and the appeal procedures, and given the opportunity to appeal.

Acronyms and Terminology

Student Programming

Acronym	Terminology
IPP	Individual Program Plan
ODD	Oppositional Defiant Disorder
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
RWG	Read and Write Gold
WJIII	Woodcock Johnson 3 rd Edition
TVPS	Test of Visual Perceptual Skills
TAPS	Test of Auditory Processing Skills
WISC IV	Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children 4 th Edition
Psych-Ed	Psycho-educational Assessment (Intelligence)
PATs	Provincial Achievement Tests
BASC	Behavior Assessment Scale for Children
UG	Un-graded
m/m	Mild/moderate

School Related

Acronym	Terminology
CST	Classroom Support Teacher
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
CSA	Classroom Support Assistant
SHA	Student Health Assistant
NLC	Native Liaison Counselor
FSLC	Family School Liaison Counselor
SIS	Student Information System
ASN	Alberta Student Number
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
AISI	Alberta Initiative for School Improvement
ESL	English as a Second Language
PD	Professional Development
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees

Coordinated Services

Acronym	Terminology
SLP	Speech Language Pathologist
OT	Occupational Therapist
PT	Physical Therapist
IPDE	Infant/Preschool Development Education
REACH	Regional Educational Assessment and Consultation Services
CARE	Community-based Services, Assessment Services, Rehabilitation and Intervention, Education and Information
CHR	Chinook Health Region
MRU	Material Resource Unit
SAPDC	Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium
SHIP	Student Health Partnership



