

A direction for Special Education

OECTA Special Education Task Force Report

ONTARIO ENGLISH
Catholic
Teachers
ASSOCIATION

The Association acknowledges the contributions of the following individuals who participated on OECTA's Special Education Task Force:

- Sonia Di Petta, Provincial Executive, Chairperson
- Claire Laughlin, Executive Assistant, Professional Development Department, Provincial Office

OECTA Unit Representatives:

- Mario Addesa, Toronto Elementary
- Bryan De Sousa, Dufferin-Peel Secondary
- Monique Dugal, Windsor-Essex Secondary
- Shawn Gaudette, Windsor-Essex Elementary
- Warren Grafton, Provincial Executive (2009-2010), Waterloo (2010)
- Elaine Mason, PVNC
- Erika Power, Toronto Elementary
- Mitch Reid, Northeastern
- Mike Silmsler, Renfrew
- Patricia Slivchak, Thunder Bay Elementary
- Tianna Travaglini-Babic, Huron Superior

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Section 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Special education in Ontario is a constantly shifting landscape. It has been a matter of concern for members throughout the history of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) particularly since the advent of the *Education Amendment Act* of 1980 (Bill 82). OECTA has undertaken various endeavours to assist members in the field of special education.

In the fall of 2009, OECTA's Provincial Executive established a Special Education Task Force to:

- identify the needs of teachers in dealing effectively with students with special education needs, including but not limited to:
 - professional development
 - class size limitations
 - processes and procedures for identification and placement of students with special needs/special education needs

- make recommendations to the Provincial Executive on these matters, including:
 - recommended changes to the delivery model
 - ways and means of effectively communicating special education issues
 - ways and means to develop and share successful innovative teaching and learning strategies

The membership included representation from OECTA's Provincial Executive, elementary and secondary classroom teachers, special education specialists as well as representatives from OECTA's Elementary and Secondary Schools committees.

The Special Education Task Force examined issues in special education including:

- policy issues
- placement issues
- procedure issues
- workload issues
- staffing issues
- challenges when working with identified students
- challenges when working with non-identified students

Realizing that a close and thorough examination of all of these issues could take years, the group focused on those issues directly related to the mandate, namely:

- defining a student with special needs/special education needs
- recommending a delivery model
- designing a professional development pathway
- revising IEP procedures
- revising assessment practices
- revising IPRCs procedures
- establishing rights to technology
- revising Special Incidence Portion (SIP) and Special Equipment Amount (SEA) funding

Overall the group made 37 recommendations to the Provincial Executive, which reflect proposed actions for OECTA across a number of fronts including:

- lobbying with various ministries of the provincial government; Ontario Teachers' Federation, etc.
- professional development (PD) strategies, including specific updating to current PD offerings, creating unique opportunities for beginning teachers, etc.
- collective bargaining of both class size and workload issues and other relevant matters.

The Provincial Executive's approved outcomes of OECTA's Special Education Task Force Report follow.

Section 2

BACKGROUND

In the 1980s and early 1990s OECTA had a standing committee on special education. It has since been disbanded.

At OECTA's 1990 AGM, a report on the *Inclusion of the Catholic Mentally Handicapped Students into the Catholic Separate Schools of the Province* was presented. The report indicated that a range of options regarding program and placement existed in Catholic schools, across the province. It concluded as follows:

“...Catholic schools are sincerely attempting to provide an environment and school experiences which reflect respect for the dignity and worth of each student and his/her rightful place in the school, the community and in God's family.”

The Association published two handbooks during that period:



1. *Room for All* (1982): A handbook to assist teachers charged with the responsibility of educating all exceptional children in our Catholic Schools.



2. *All together now: Dealing with the integrated student* (1990)
A Special Education Handbook for Elementary-Secondary Classroom Teachers

More recently, OECTA's Professional development department has produced additional publications related to special education, including:

- OECTA's Guide to the *Individual Education Plan*, 2008
- a discussion paper on *Individual Education Plans: Standards for Development, Program Planning and Implementation*, 2000

In addition, OECTA provides Additional Qualification (AQ) courses related to special education, including: Inclusive Classroom, Special Education, and the innovative Special Education-Autism. The PD Network offers workshops on Special Education, IEP's and Assistive Technology.

In 2008 and 2006, OECTA surveyed elementary and secondary teachers regarding their workload. Each study sought out members' perceptions related to teaching students with exceptionalities/special needs.

When asked to identify the factors that have contributed to their increased workload and stress, 70 per cent of elementary teachers identify an increase in students with exceptionalities in their classes, whereas 48 per cent of secondary teachers indicate that the numbers of students with behaviour challenges, students with exceptionalities and ESL students have contributed to their sense of overwork and stress. (Bennett & Gallagher, 2009)

Elementary and secondary teachers consistently identified supports in dealing with increasing numbers of students with exceptionalities, especially behaviour, as a remedy to overworking and relieving stress. Itinerant teachers (e.g., ESL, FSL, teacher-librarians) and beginning teachers named this as a high priority.

The workload studies indicated that:

Teachers need to be provided with a wide range of supports and services to assist them and students with exceptionalities in the... classroom. Such supports include professional learning opportunities, increased trained personnel at the board and school level to support teachers in the... classroom, increased material resources such as assistive technology, reduction in class size in relation to the number of students with exceptionalities in the... classroom and the call for smaller schools to support inclusive practice. (Bennett & Gallagher, 2009)

In the fall of 2009, Dr. Sheila Bennett and Dr. Tiffany Gallagher prepared a report to the Provincial Executive entitled: *Special Education in Ontario: Classroom and Special Education Teachers' Challenges*. The report included key information from earlier workload surveys and synthesized information about special education in Ontario. It was intended to provide a comprehensive review of the challenges faced by classroom and special education teachers. This report summarized special education in Ontario, and teachers' perspectives, which provided the Association's Provincial Executive with additional impetus to establish the Special Education Task Force. The preceding information, along with individual member experiences and dynamic group discussions, informed the work and deliberations of the Special Education Task Force.

Given the varied experiences of the Special Education Task Force, and the scope of the tasks assigned, a number of strategies were employed to ensure each meeting was purposeful and focused. Prior to the first meeting, each member was asked write a brief introductory profile about themselves, which were then shared with the entire group. Task Force members' responses started the group's journey.

The composition and varied experiences of the Special Education Task Force membership reflected the diversity of OECTA's membership, which includes elementary and secondary teachers, beginning and experienced teachers and board and school level resource personnel. The Task Force composition also reflected a continuum of board models with regards to identification, program and placement, as well as philosophies of inclusion and segregation.

After issues were identified, brainstorming helped the group to move from tentative solutions, to actual recommendations for the Provincial Executive. With a facilitated brainstorming approach, members committed to:

- brainstorming ideas – all ideas were accepted and no one could shut down an idea at this stage
- seeking clarification/elaboration of ideas – to ensure uniform understanding
- evaluating options – individual members' responses to ideas were either yes, no or maybe
- moving to possible solutions – only ideas that were supported by yes or maybe
- framing accepted solutions as recommendations

This was a highly productive but lengthy process and members dedicated a great deal of energy and diligence to being as thoughtful and reflective as possible. Hundreds of ideas came forward that reflect the varied teaching experiences of the Special Education Task Force members. Recommendations were proposed across the entire scope of special education and of such depth and breadth that they would take years to design and implement. Many are well beyond the scope outlined to the Special Education Task Force when it was conceived. Should such an opportunity become available, this Task Force could devote significant energy towards addressing the responsibilities all of the stakeholders (Ministries of Children and Youth, Health and Long Term Care, and Education; Faculties of Education; Ontario College of Teachers; Ontario Teachers' Federation; school boards, parents, etc.) and the issues arising in special education in Ontario, today.

Section 3

OUTCOMES

At the outset, it is necessary to define the student who should be supported by special education. This student meets the criteria for one of the Ministry of Education categories of identification, whether or not a board chooses to formally identify through the IPRC process, and those students on a pathway to identification, formal or informal, who are not achieving within one of the four levels of achievement in the Ontario Curriculum. While there is no doubt that many students benefit from additional teacher support, this belief is not the foundation of special education in Ontario. Special education is about supporting students with special needs/special education needs¹. Principles of differentiated instruction, research regarding multiple intelligences as well as appropriate professional and staff development will assist classroom/subject teachers to meet the needs of those students not achieving at the provincial standard.

The Special Education Task Force believes that if there is greater clarity about the student supported by special education, then the roles of teachers and support personnel would be clearer to, and more supportive of, the classroom/subject teacher.

It became evident, in the discussions and deliberations of the Task Force, that in order to make recommendations in the areas directed by the Provincial Executive, there needed to be a consideration of special education, in Ontario, as a whole. Special education across Ontario varies dramatically in philosophy, program, placement, practice, implementation and terminology, which conflicts any direction setting and support contemplated by OECTA. The variance of such factors as models, philosophies and language directly impacts all teachers involved in supporting students with special needs/special education needs. More importantly, before teacher needs can be adequately addressed, significant streamlining of special education processes, procedures and more, needs to occur.

With the variability in models across the province, school boards have adopted an insular approach and very few best practices are transferred from one board to another. Similarly, Task Force members reported that best practices in one school are not replicated in others, depending on the decision making of the administrator, parent community, and/or Special Education Advisory Committee (S.E.A.C.). With the background and expertise of the members, we firmly believe that many of the

answers to the challenges currently facing teachers, with regards to special education, are in the varied practices across the province. The residual challenge lies in finding the ways and means to disseminate best practices to all teachers across the province.

One more context needs to be included in the special education picture and that is the varied experiences and qualifications of teachers currently teaching special classes or fulfilling a resource/itinerant role². In many school boards across the province, assignments to the two roles are being filled by beginning teachers. These vacancies result from the retirement of many highly experienced educators but are also the result of two additional factors:

1. Teachers currently assigned a special education position are leaving the role. They find paperwork, processes, and other tasks/duties directed by administration, interfere dramatically with the time they can spend teaching students.
2. Experienced classroom teachers, who may have considered special education, and have the qualifications are not interested in the position.

The fact that a number of beginning teachers are fulfilling the Special Education teacher role framed a number of Task Force recommendations.

As we begin to address the mandate of this Task Force it is important to consider two things: a definition of a student with special needs/special education needs³, and an appropriate delivery model for special education.

3.1 The student defined

A student with special needs/special education needs is defined as a student who has been identified through either an IPRC process, an informal process or through assessment(s)³ which supports a special needs designation, in one or more of the following categories of exceptionalities: behavioral, communication, intellectual, physical, or multiple. Appendix B defines each of the specific exceptionalities included in each category.

Currently, a student can only be identified as exceptional through the formal IPRC process as outlined in Regulation 181/98. This formal process necessitates a yearly review, including assessment, establishing a committee, and much more. Generally, the reviews do not change identifications for most students, or placement for many. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends an informal review process when assessment information indicates that the student meets the Ministry criteria to be deemed exceptional. Ongoing review would occur

at the request of the parent through the cyclical review process of the IEP. The number of formally identified students should not be tied to funding, including Special Incidence Portion funding (SIP), or other supports. The formal IPRC process consumes a great deal of teacher (classroom and/or special education) time, which could be better utilized in teaching the student, and not engaged in paperwork solely to continue the same level of supports, placement, etc.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends:

- **an informal review process if assessment information indicates that the student meets the Ministry criteria to be deemed exceptional. Ongoing review, at the request of the parent, would occur through the cyclical review process of the IEP.**

3.2 The delivery model

The Ministry of Education Regulation 181/98 states that when considering placement of an exceptional student, placement in a regular class must first be considered if it meets the student's needs and is consistent with parental preferences. Our recommendation of a special education delivery model is framed within the concept of Regulation 181/98, our Catholic beliefs and OECTA's principle of promoting Catholic values. All students have unconditional value and the right to learn. Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche, said it best: "Every child needs to know that they are a source of joy; every child needs to be celebrated." We believe that all students benefit from being together with their peers in a variety of educational and social contexts.

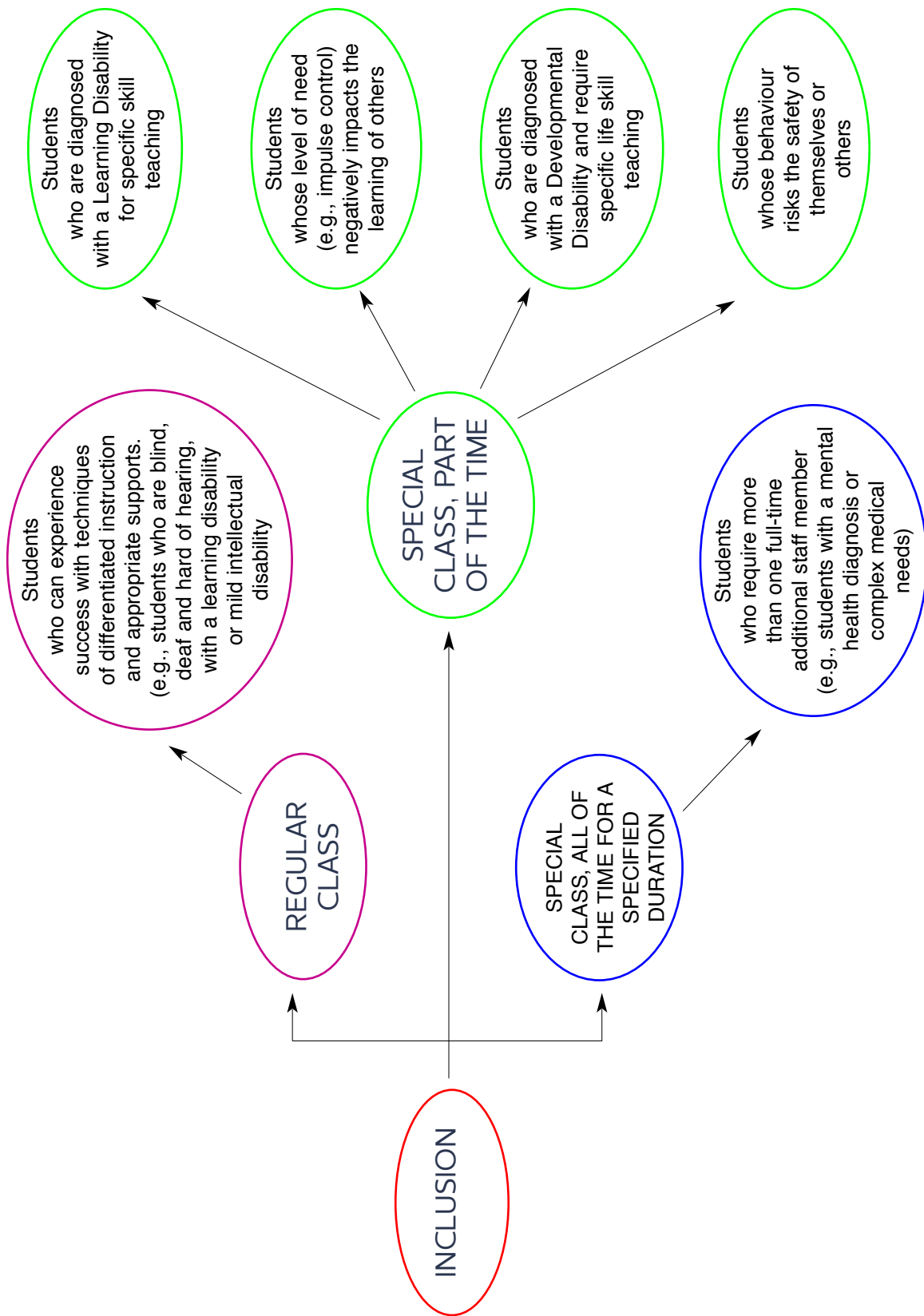
With the aforementioned in mind, our delivery model is framed as follows:

1. Inclusion⁴ in the classroom, with support, should be the first consideration. Through a process of collaboration or consensus building with classroom/subject teacher, special education staff/personnel, principal and parent. Consideration of alternative placements should occur after this has been attempted, and ongoing consultation between stakeholders has occurred.
2. There is a place for all our students in a regular classroom setting with support, including, appropriate materials and equipment, additional trained and qualified staff support, and ongoing professional development for all staff who support the student.

3. However for some students with special needs/special education needs, at a particularly challenging time in their lives, this is contraindicated. These are students with special needs/special education needs who require specialized support, or skill acquisition training outside of a classroom context and beyond the supports provided by the Ministry of Education. They are best served with specialized staff (i.e., staff provided through Ministry of Children and Youth (MCYS) and/or Ministry of Health (MOH) in an alternate setting within the school, or other facility (e.g., Section 23 placements).

Placement needs to be considered on an individual basis. While most students with special needs/special education needs can benefit from time in the regular class, some students require a combination of time in a special education class and in the classroom. The decision about placement should be based on the needs of the student and level of support that will be provided (i.e., additional trained and qualified staff and ongoing professional development for all staff that support the student). Placement decisions must be reviewed regularly for suitability.

The following diagram clarifies our recommended model. (See page 10).



INCLUSION

Regular Class

Students who can experience success with techniques of differentiated instruction and appropriate supports (e.g. students who are blind, deaf or hard of hearing, with a learning or mild intellectual disability, etc.)

Special Class part of the time, including, for example:

- a) students who are diagnosed with a learning disability for specific skill teaching.
- b) students whose level of need (i.e., impulse control) negatively impacts the learning of others.
- c) students who are diagnosed with a developmental disability and require specific life skill teaching.
- d) students whose behaviour risks the safety of themselves or others.

Special Class all of the time, for a specified duration, for example:

Students who require more than one full time additional staff member (e.g., mental health diagnosis or complex medical needs).

This model reflects the current practice of many, but not all, Catholic school boards in the province. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association endorses this model as the appropriate model for special education in Ontario's Catholic Schools.

The Special Education Task Force had strong beliefs about inclusion as the right of all students. However, the scope of student needs and current shortcomings of the system, especially in terms of suitable staff and material supports, necessitated consideration of a range of placement options.

The need for all students and staff to feel and be safe with students with special education needs, gave rise to the concept of a range of placement options, at specified periods or times. While current legislation for the safety of staff and students does exist, it is seldom fully enforced. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will lobby the Ministry of Labour to ensure labour laws relevant to working with students with special needs/special education needs are implemented in school boards and any incidents are judiciously reported.

The Special Education Task Force strongly believes that placements, other than inclusion in the classroom, should not be a consideration for a student's entire school career. Ongoing review would examine this point. Placement decisions should never be undertaken solely on a fiscal basis. Funding will be discussed further on in this report.

Moving on then from our recommended delivery model, it is now necessary to explore the implications of such a model on class size and professional development.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association:

- **endorses the following as the model of Special Education in Ontario's Catholic Schools:**
 - **Inclusion in the classroom, with support, should be the first consideration**
 - **There is a place for all our students in the regular classroom setting with support**
 - **However, for some students with special needs/special education needs, at a particularly challenging time in their lives, this is contraindicated**
- **will lobby the Ministry of Labour to ensure labour laws relevant to working with students with special needs/special education needs are implemented in school boards and any incidents are judiciously reported**

3.3 Class size

Every student, in every school, is entitled to the supports necessary to succeed in school and in life. Support for students with special needs/special education needs should come from a variety of personnel at the school, board and community levels. However, the teacher is at the center of every student's education. For those with special needs, there must be a team of teachers, which includes the special education and classroom teachers. In secondary schools, that core team should be supported by Student Success and Guidance teachers. The skills and talents of these educators especially in transitioning students into and out of secondary schools, determining suitable high school pathways, as well as post-secondary destinations are keys to the ongoing success of students with special needs/special education needs, beyond school.

With direction of the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that when a student spends any time in class with age-appropriate peers, the student should be counted for all class size purposes. Boards cannot be permitted to continue practices, such as not counting a student who spends any time in a special education class or program in the calculation of class size numbers for the classroom/subject period. In addition, it is recommended that students with special needs/special education needs placed in a classroom/subject period should be distributed equally across classes, subjects, periods, etc.

The next facet of the class size dilemma is the combination of learning profiles and number of students placed in special classes on either a part-time or full-time basis. If student needs are such that they are going to spend part or all of their day in a special class, then an optimal learning environment must be created. In most cases they should be grouped by exceptionality. This allows for specific skill teaching on an ongoing and consistent basis, optimizing learning for all.

Another facet of the class size issue is the enrolment of students with special needs/special education needs in secondary Open level courses. In some of these courses, a significant number of students with special needs/special education needs are grouped into the same class as it fits for timetable purposes. This creates a number of challenges for the secondary teacher delivering the course. As mentioned above, students with special needs/special education needs should be equitably distributed across all the sections of a course.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that secondary level needs in Open and K courses be forwarded to the Collective Bargaining department at OECTA's Provincial Office.

The concept of classes that include a number of different exceptionalities or distinctly different diagnoses, have allowed boards to manipulate regulation 298 (Section 31) and increase class sizes beyond what is listed in the regulations, for specific exceptionalities. Under the regulation, a board can place one or two less needy students in a special education class and then utilize the part of the regulation that states. "In a class for exceptional pupils consisting of pupils with different exceptionalities, the maximum enrolment can be sixteen pupils." This manipulation creates classes that are unsafe and also untenable for teachers. It also minimizes support to students who warrant it. As a result of these unsound practices, and the direction of the Task Force, the Association recommends that the special education class size, for each exceptionality outlined in regulation 298 be the absolute maximum in each class. Further, it is recommended that if a class contains more than one type of exceptional student, the class size should be the lowest class size applicable for the exceptionalities present, as outlined in regulation 298.

This example is offered as clarification:

In Mr. Smith's class there are 12 students, 8 students have mild developmental delay, 1 student has a developmental disability and 3 students have Autism. The board deems that his class is a class for multiple exceptionalities, which means Mr. Smith could expect four more students as per Regulation 298 (30 and 31). In another board, Mr. Smith's class has a majority of students with mild intellectual disabilities and so the class is at the maximum of 12 allowed in the Regulation.

The recommendation, outlined above, would see Mr. Smith's class at 6 because he has students with Autism in his room and the class size for students with Autism in regulation 298 is six pupils.

If these maximums are not adhered to, program implementation, student success and safety become issues of significant concern.

If we are advocating that inclusion, with support, is the preferred model of delivery, then much of the support to students will need to be delivered by a special education teacher in an itinerant role. Supporting the classroom teacher to plan and implement a special program is key to student success. It is also essential to the classroom teacher who is supporting the student in a class/subject. In a number of boards, the role of itinerant special education teacher is fulfilled by a vice-principal and, in some cases, by the principal. Given the essential role of the special education teacher, it is essential that the practice of assigning this role to either a vice-principal or principal, cease. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that the Collective Bargaining Department and Committee establish the removal of principals/vice-principals from special education teacher role, as a bargaining priority for 2012 round of negotiations.

It is no surprise that with the variation in special education models across the province, the staffing allocations and processes are similarly varied. Special Education teachers fulfilling an itinerant role should have an established and fixed caseload of students. The caseload would include students with special needs/special education needs and those on a pathway towards identification, either formally or informally. If the pathway to identification results in a student not meeting the criteria of exceptionality, then he/she should not become part of the Special Education teacher's caseload.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that the maximum caseload for a full time, itinerant, Special Education teacher be set at 20 students. It should be prorated accordingly for part-time teachers. This could be more specifically addressed if OECTA undertook to survey the current caseload of Special Education teachers. The survey would query:

- number of students currently supported and their level of need
- numbers of IEPs developed, implemented and updated
- number of academic assessments undertaken
- number of IPRCs (Identification and Review) that are prepared for and undertaken in a given school year

Other workload questions could be included in the survey. Other departments within the Association could provide input here. Accordingly, as a follow up to this report and the direction of Special Education Task Force, the Association will undertake a workload survey of special education teachers fulfilling both special class and itinerant roles.

With the direction of the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that:

- when a student with special needs spends any time in class with age-appropriate peers, the student should be counted for all class size purposes
- when students with special needs/special education needs are placed in a classroom/subject period, they should be distributed equally across classes, subjects, periods etc.
- the issue of equitable distribution of students across all sections of a course, be forwarded to OECTA's Collective Bargaining Department to address this, at the secondary level, particularly in Open and K courses
- the special education class size, for each exceptionality outlined in Regulation 298, is the 'absolute' maximum in each class
- if a class contains more than one type of exceptional student, the class size should be the lowest class size applicable of the exceptionalities present, as outlined in Regulation 298
- the Collective Bargaining department and the Collective Bargaining committee establish the removal of principals and vice-principals being assigned/placed in the special education teacher role as a bargaining priority for the 2012 round of negotiations
- the maximum caseload for a full time, itinerant, special education teacher be set at 20 students
- a workload survey of special education teachers in both special class and itinerant roles, will be untaken

3.4 Professional Development

Ongoing, job embedded⁵, professional development (PD) for teachers is key and no less important from a special education teacher point of view. Teachers of students with special needs/special education needs are continually introduced to new diagnoses, strategies to address needs, varied technology, curriculum interventions and supports, as well as individualized student equipment and more. This, on top of new and evolving pedagogy can, at times, seem overwhelming. Delivering valuable PD is a fundamental tenet of the Association. However, any plan for professional

development should be in keeping with the Association's statement regarding professional development namely:

“... authentic professional development is a self-directed and voluntary process through which teachers, as autonomous professionals, establish and pursue their own goals for their continuous, life-long professional learning, improvement, and growth.”

With direction of the Special Education Task Force, the Association will develop a special education PD framework at the local and provincial levels. The following forms the basis of the OECTA PD framework:

1. OECTA Conferences: Educating for the Common Good, Beginning Teachers, When Faith Meets Pedagogy, etc. have a special education component integrated throughout, including keynote addresses.
2. Each year, all teachers are to be provided an overview of the relevant aspects of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to ensure safety standards are in place and adhered to when working with students with special needs/special education needs.
3. An up-to-date pamphlet similar to Know Your Rights to Safe Work in Schools, be developed to inform teachers of their rights when working with students with special needs/special education needs.
4. All teachers need ongoing support and training. Sessions on differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students not achieving the provincial standard and comprehensive behaviour strategies for the classroom are two examples. To ensure access and participation, sessions should be provided in a variety of formats, (i.e., 'in person', print and electronic means).
5. Create sessions for classroom/subject teachers to specifically address strategies for students performing below Level 3 of the Ontario Curriculum, through OECTA's PD Network Workshop program.
6. All PD Network sessions have a component of special education integrated throughout.
7. Encourage the development of Collaborative Learning Communities comprised of both classroom and special education teachers.
8. A session for secondary teachers (i.e., teaching locally developed courses and Special Education teachers), on current literacy strategies implemented in the elementary panel.

Note: Nothing has impacted special education so significantly, in recent times, as technology. While there is a significant need for professional development in this area, the Special Education Task Force and the Association believe that the innovations possible as a result of technology warranted stand alone recommendations, which will be included further in the report.

In addition to developing the framework, it is recommended that the Association lobby the Ministry for additional professional development days as a means to implement the pertinent items from the framework above. The Association believes that professional development should occur within the instructional day, through release time. At the very least, one professional development day per year should be designated for special education.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will implement a tracking measure to ensure that boards follow the Ministry directive regarding PD days dedicated to special education. The involvement of the local unit professional development committee and joint board/bargaining unit professional development committees would be key to ensuring these days are relevant and valuable learning experiences.

A more planned and substantive approach to professional development must be undertaken for beginning teachers. For the purposes of this report, beginning teachers are defined as those in their first five years of teaching. As mentioned previously, more beginning teachers are fulfilling standard and highly complex special education teaching assignments. Given this context, it is important that a number of steps be undertaken to support this new reality. This approach must start with the faculties of education in preparing teacher candidates adequately for this.

In order to do so, the Association with direction from the Special Education Task Force recommends that through teacher education committees, OTF and other channels, encourage faculties to undertake the following, as the minimum standard:

1. Deliver sound and current pedagogy regarding special education in all faculty programs. Note: The Ontario College of Teachers should revise accreditation for faculties based on their inclusion of a special education module.
2. Facilitate a minimum of one placement for each teacher candidate in a faculty program that includes working with students with special needs/special education needs. This placement can be in either a classroom or special class.

With direction of the Special Education Task Force, the Association will lobby the Ontario College of Teachers as well as the deans of the faculties of education to ensure that these changes occur. The beginning teachers on the Special Education Task Force indicated that very little special education was addressed within the faculty program they attended.

The need for professional development and ongoing support are crucial to ensure success, continuity in the profession and a positive start for a beginning teacher. With direction of the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends

that a designated professional development and a differentiated NTIP pathway be created for beginning teachers fulfilling a Special Education teacher role. The pathway would include:

1. A revision to, or differentiation of, the Special Education Part One Additional Qualification course, so that it is geared to beginning teachers in special education. For beginning teachers fulfilling a Special Education teacher role, this course should be offered at free of charge.
2. An individualized NTIP pathway for beginning teachers in a special education class/position. The modules would include sessions on: IEP development, modifying and accommodating curriculum, determining suitable alternative expectations, assessment etc. For the modules currently outlined in NTIP, the teacher would have the option of choosing a mentor who has expertise in special education. In some regions of the province, email, blogs or other connections to expert mentor teachers in other areas of the province should also be considered.
3. For those who are Special Education teachers in their first five years of teaching, a series of workshops should be designed and delivered to reflect their unique circumstances. The Association will lobby the Ministry of Education for funding to provide additional support to beginning teachers in this circumstance.
4. A strand at the Beginning Teachers conference include support for beginning teachers fulfilling a Special Education teacher role.

With the direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will:

- **develop a special education PD framework at the local and provincial levels. The framework would incorporate the specifics outlined on page 16, of this report**
- **lobby the Ministry for additional professional development days as a means to implement the pertinent items from the special education PD framework**
- **implement a tracking measure to ensure that boards follow the Ministry directive regarding PD days dedicated to special education**
- **through Teacher Education committees, OTF and other channels, encourage faculties to undertake the following, as the minimum standard for students in the faculties of education:**
 - **Instruction in current, sound pedagogy and evidence based practices regarding special education**
 - **One placement working with students with special needs, in either a classroom or special class setting**
- **lobby the Ontario College of Teachers and the Deans of the Faculties of Education to ensure that the standard is adopted**
- **lobby for the creation & implementation of a designated professional development pathway and a differentiated NTIP pathway**

3.5 Technology

As mentioned earlier, advances in technology have significantly changed the face of special education in a myriad of ways. Technological advances in the medical field have enabled some of our most vulnerable students to survive and thrive. Technological advances in the world at large have leveled the playing field for many students with special needs/special education needs. The pace of technological advances and its implications for education necessitated that the Special Education Task Force consider technology separately from other components of its mandate. There are certain practices relevant to technology that must be established and upheld. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will advance the following practices concerning the use of technology for all students with special needs/special education needs and teachers:

1. All students have equal access to hardware and software necessary to support their learning. Advocating for this right, will assist teachers to more successfully meet student needs.
2. All teachers are provided with training, during the instructional day, on technology and ways to utilize it to deliver curriculum. Professional development days, dedicated to special education could provide additional time for such training. ‘At the elbow’ technology support should be available during such training.
3. All newly built schools comply to a minimum technological standard including wireless access throughout the building.
4. Students who require highly specialized medical equipment and interventions (e.g., external pacemakers, breathing tubes, occupational therapy, nursing etc.) be supported by trained medical staff funded through the Ministry of Health.
5. All textbooks, which are on the Ministry’s Trillium list, are made available in a variety of electronic formats (at least 3) as a condition of inclusion on the list. The 3 formats should ensure the widest access for students with technological access needs. (e.g., for students who are blind/visually impaired, Daisy would be the suitable format)
6. The Ministry pursues centralized purchase/lease of computer hardware and software. Given the rate of advancement, it seems the most fiscally responsible route to pursue.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will:

- advance the practices outlined above concerning the use of technology for all students with special needs/special education needs and teachers.

3.6 Paperwork:

Assessments⁵, Identification Placement and Review Committee Meetings (IPRC), and Individual Education Plans (IEP)

With the proposed delivery model, it is important that classroom/subject teachers are supported by adequate resources and by having them available on an ongoing, scheduled and consistent basis. This is most important when the resource is the special education teacher. Support can be undertaken in a variety of ways, depending on the time of the year and the needs of the student. Primarily classroom/subject teachers are looking for ongoing support to plan and deliver some of the components of the program for students with special needs/special education needs. This can be done when the special education teacher is delivering program/instruction to the student/students rather than completing a myriad of paperwork. This paperwork is generated on three fronts-Assessment, IPRCs and IEPs. The Special Education Task Force and the Association strongly believes there needs to be a significant reduction in the perpetual and cyclical, paperwork processes associated with special education.

3.6.1 Assessment

As the Ministry of Education has moved to such a concentrated focus on data driven results, the amount of classroom assessment has grown exponentially. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that any classroom assessment either by the teacher or by the special education teacher should be authentic and only undertaken to inform practice (instruction, program implementation, etc.).

Given the quantity and scope of assessment currently undertaken by classroom teachers, assessment undertaken by a special education teacher should be in addition to that information, and not a duplication of the information provided by the classroom teacher. The assessment should be undertaken and reported in a timely manner. Approximately two months should be sufficient to ensure that classroom/subject teachers have the information necessary to revise the student's program as needed.

Diagnostic assessments by special education teachers should be undertaken when a teacher has significant concerns about a student. Ongoing assessment should be undertaken to measure student progress towards achievement of either the curriculum expectations or the expectations of the IEP. Continuous assessment solely to support IPRC reviews should not be undertaken.

Once a student requires support because their performance is below level one of their current grade level, and/or because the student is on an IEP then the special education teacher would assume responsibility for any individual academic assessment from that point forward. Since this is a component of the Special Education teacher's role, it should appear as dedicated time on the teacher's timetable. The assessment should focus on areas of weakness and include not only results but strategies to support the student on a go forward basis.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that:

- any classroom assessment by either the classroom teacher or by the Special Education teacher should be authentic and only undertaken to inform practice (instruction, program implementation, etc.).

3.6.2 Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)

Current Ministry policy, regulation and directives require that IPRCs occur yearly and that IEPs be updated each reporting period. Many components (e.g. review of student needs, progress over the term/semester/year) of these two processes are so similar that they often duplicate each other. It is this duplication that the Special Education Task Force sought to remedy.

Some boards in Ontario have eliminated IPRC reviews, unless a parent specifically requests one. Students with special needs/special education needs are succeeding in these boards as in other boards, which suggests that IPRC reviews are not necessary. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that the review component of IPRCs occur within the context of IEP review. The IEP team would become the IPRC committee for review purposes. The elimination of review IPRCs, which place extensive demands on special education teachers regarding paperwork and assessment, would increase the availability of special education teachers to provide instruction to support student with special needs in various classroom contexts.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that:

- the review components of IPRCs occur within the context of IEP review.

3.6.3 Individual Education Plans (IEP)

In 2004, the Ministry of Education issued the following memorandum, in relation to the Provincial Report Card: “Students with special needs/special education needs have a legal right to receive accommodations and services; therefore the achievement of these students is reported in relation to the achievement of the curriculum expectations, not in relation to their achievement within the context of any accommodations or services they receive.” Since the advent of Education for All and the directions of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, students are being accommodated as a matter of practice. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that initiating an IEP that contains accommodations only is not necessary and should not be a requirement for elementary or secondary students with special needs/special education needs. This would again re-focus support to the classroom/subject teacher to plan and deliver program.

In addition to IEPs that are developed solely for students with accommodations, many elementary special education and classroom teachers are being directed by administration (school and/or board) to create IEPs for students who are achieving at grade level, but not achieving at the provincial standard (i.e. Level 3). Given the Ministry’s 4 levels of achievement, students consistently performing at Level 1 and Level 2 are still at grade level and do not require an IEP.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that teachers discontinue the practice of creating an IEP for students who are achieving at Level 1, 2, 3, or 4 of their current grade level, without modifications to the curriculum. Generally with the academic, applied, and locally developed course pathways, in secondary, this is not the practice.

Currently elementary and secondary teachers are required to develop IEPs and finalize within 30 school days at either the start of the year/semester/program. In addition, IEPs are to be updated once per reporting period. In the context of Growing Success, it is recommended that a number of current practices related to IEP development, review and updating, require major revisions despite Ministry communiqués to the contrary. The Association could initiate this following the special education teacher workload survey or lobby the Ministry of Education to undertake this task with input from the teacher affiliates. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will lobby the Ministry to:

- revise the IEP standards to align with the progress/midterm report;
- revise the requirement to review the IEP from three times to twice in the elementary panel;
- similarly, revise the requirement to review the IEP three times to twice in the secondary panel.

The first IEP would be developed within the 30 days and then updated at the end of each semester/achievement period.

With the move to fewer report cards, it is also time to examine the cyclical review of IEPs. IEPs are not static documents and should be updated as a student demonstrates progress on specific expectations. It should not be necessary or required to update IEPs if progress has not been made on the expectations. Review for the sake of review is taking time away from teachers fulfilling an instructional role. With fewer report cards, and the progress report, it is hoped the progress is more observable and measurable. Reporting and IEP writing may actually align.

For those students who cannot access any of the Ontario curriculum, and whose program is solely alternative expectations, the Association recommends that the IEP serve as the both the program and the report card to parents. This can be done with the addition of a simple rating scale similar to the 4 levels of achievement.

The following serves as an example:

Scoring	Assessment scale	Scoring	Level of staff intervention scale
1	Rarely = 25% or less of the trials	.1	With physical prompts = staff use of hand over hand or partial physical (e.g., tap to elbow)
2	Sometimes = 26 – 50 % of the trials	.2	With model/visual prompts = staff demonstrates completion or steps of task; visual representation is provided (e.g., photographs, picture communication symbols, picture jig)
3	Frequently = 51 – 75 % of the trials	.3	With gestural prompts = staff indicate through body language (e.g., hand gesture, pointing, facial expression or eye gaze)
4	Usually = 76 – 100% of the trials	.4	Independently = student is able to complete the task with no intervention from staff. Important note: The student may select to use visuals.

(Source: ACE/ACT pilot, Barrie region 2009)

The report card of a student with special needs/special education needs, pursuing alternative expectations, could then have the score recorded beside the expectation or as simple summary statements on a standardized appendix.

The refinements outlined above would markedly decrease the extensive paperwork demands of the Special Education teacher, thereby permitting additional focus on teaching. Revisions to the paperwork processes are fundamental to managing the workload of special education teachers as well as necessary to support the classroom/subject teacher. IEP development, assessment and IPRCs are components of a special education teacher role (either itinerant or special class teacher). Given this, with direction of the Special Education Task Force, the Association will pursue through collective bargaining processes that teachers fulfilling a special education teacher role (either itinerant or special class teacher) have time for the IEP, assessment and IPRC components of their job regularly scheduled on their timetable. It is anticipated that the inclusion of these job components as part of the Special Education teachers schedule, would communicate clearly to the school staff, what demands the Special Education teacher is fulfilling as well as ensure that the level of resource allocated to schools would accurately reflect the needs in the school. Many administrators do not understand that these pieces are part of the role and not the parts that should be done during a Special Education teacher's planning and preparation time.

As previously described in the report, the Special Education Task Force supports a model of inclusion. The key to successful inclusion is time to work collaboratively to develop, implement and review the individual program for a student with special needs/special education needs. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will continue to pursue a collective bargaining objective which has dedicated time, outside of planning time, for classroom/subject and Special Education teachers to collaborate on the program and progress of students with special needs/special education needs. Time to collaborate is essential, in a professional learning community and for the students to achieve to their full potential.

Along with preparation time for the classroom/subject teacher to collaborate with the Special Education teacher in the school, it is of tantamount importance to incorporate transition planning into the duties of administrators and Special Education teachers for many students with special needs/special education needs. While the transition from grade to grade, board to board and teacher to teacher is important, one of the most important transitions that should be planned and scheduled is the transition between elementary and secondary school. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will meet with the

Ministry to ensure/monitor that each board complies with the directions contained in the Ministry of Education Transition Planning: A Resource Guide 2002 and Effective Educational Practices for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders 2007. Even within the small number of boards represented on the Special Education Task Force, this was not consistent or always apparent. Members feel this is a key innovative strategy to ensure student success while building teacher confidence and competence. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that the Ministry of Education direct boards to establish parameters for transition planning, at all levels.

Technology can assist in so many ways, mentioned throughout the report. In keeping with this, and with direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will lobby the Ministry initiate and maintain an OSR database to ensure key student information is readily available to Boards/teachers upon entering a student's Ontario Education Number (OEN).

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that:

- **initiating an IEP that contains accommodations only is not necessary and should not be a requirement for elementary or secondary students with special needs/special education needs**
- **teachers discontinue the practice of creating an IEP for students who are achieving at Level 1, 2, 3, or 4 of their current grade level, without modifications to the curriculum**
- **a number of current practices related to IEP development, review and updating, require major revisions**
- **the Ministry be lobbied to:**
 - **revise the IEP standard to align with the progress/midterm report**
 - **revise the requirement to review the IEP from three times to twice in the elementary panel**
 - **similarly, revise the requirement to review the IEP three times to twice in the secondary panel**
- **the IEP serve as both the program and the report card to parents, for students whose program is solely alternative expectations**
- **given that IEP development, assessment and IPRCs are components of a special education teacher role, we pursue through collective bargaining processes, teachers fulfilling a special education teacher role (either itinerant or special class teacher) have time for these components (i.e., IEP development, assessment and IPRCs) of their job regularly scheduled on their timetable**

- **collective bargaining objective be pursued which has dedicated time, outside of planning/preparation time, for classroom/subject and special education teacher to collaborate on the program and progress of students with special needs/special education needs**
- **a meeting occur with the Ministry to ensure/monitor that each board complies with the directions contained in the Ministry of Education Transition Planning documents**
- **the Ministry of Education direct boards to establish parameters for transition planning at all levels**
- **the Ministry to initiate and maintain an OSR database to ensure key student information is readily available to Boards/teachers upon entering a student's Ontario Education Number (OEN)**

3.7 Funding

A revised funding model for special education has been in discussion and promised for a number of years ever since previous models were put on hold. There are strong indications from the Ministry that discussions and the finalization of a funding model is imminent. Given the current economic climate and recent announcements of the Ministry of Education and provincial government, it seems unlikely that the new/revised funding model will contemplate any significant increase to current funding levels. While the Special Education Task Force spent a great deal of time discussing the inadequacies of special education funding, we firmly believe that two pieces are relevant to our mandate.

Despite the current economic times, teachers need a funding model that will adequately address the needs of students, and provide the staff and material supports that will assist them to meet the student's needs, in a safe environment that has manageable numbers and teachers with expertise in meeting the needs of the students. The costs for some of this need not solely come from special education funding.

Special Incidence Portion (SIP) Funding and Special Equipment Amount (SEA) Funding, including recent changes, warrant some consideration. SIP funding can be accessed by school boards when a student's needs warrant staffing above two to one. Given this criteria, it is typically highly specialized staff that is in place. The cap of \$27,000 does not adequately address the salary of such an individual or any other associated costs (e.g. specialized/appropriate program materials) to address the student's needs. As a matter of fact, this amount is below the provincial grid for educational assistants. At this time, there are no indications that the government has any plans to increase this amount.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will lobby the government to re-establish the weighting factor as a component of Special Incidence Portion Funding.

All new school buildings should be designed to permit access regardless of need. While the Accessibility Act provides for that, many accommodations to school buildings are undertaken as if adults would be occupying every space and so retrofitting has to occur for young students. This often comes from special education funding. It should rightly come from board capital budgets. In addition, funding from other ministries should be accessed to address complex medical and social emotional needs. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will lobby the government to have a voice at the Tri-Ministry table. Despite years of discussion, very little interministerial cooperation, between Ministry of Health, Children and Youth and Education has occurred. A strong teacher voice at this table will advance the issues in a more expeditious manner.

While it is helpful that the previous practice of claiming individual equipment for students has been revised so that individual claims are no longer necessary for computer and associated hardware and software, there is an inherent danger that funding may not go to support this endeavour. With the advantages that technology provides students with special needs/special education needs, its funding must be dedicated to technology. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will undertake an education initiative, perhaps as part of the Collective Bargaining regional sessions, to monitor board funding of technology to ensure it coincides with the level provided for in the revised SEA grant per pupil amount and other components of SEA funding.

Student success is everyone's concern. With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will include a special education component in any future provincial budget or Ministry of Education GSN briefs. Key points to address include:

- declining enrolment does not dictate a similar decline in students with special needs/special education needs
- given the wide range of needs of some students, including physical, social/emotional etc., cross Ministry collaboration is required. Again this has been talked about for several years but progress to date has been negligible. As mentioned earlier, access to a wide range of personnel and appropriate facilities is key to ensure the student is safe and productive. Support of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Youth are key. School boards cannot be expected to fund these services independently of these Ministries. Interministerial collaboration should be championed

- exploring other possible funding options. One example would be to reduce the costs of EQAO (if testing occurred bi-yearly or by a random sampling method) and applying them elsewhere

This brief discussion on funding is not a reflection of an exhaustive list, but we trust this captures some of the issue. All believe that a successful special education delivery model is predicated on sufficient funding!

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends:

- **lobbying the government to re-establish the weighting factor as a component of Special Incidence Portion funding**
- **lobbying the government to have a voice at the Tri-Ministry table**
- **undertaking an education initiative, perhaps as part of the Collective Bargaining regional sessions, to monitor board funding of technology, to ensure it coincides with the level provided for in the revised SEA grant per pupil amount and other components of SEA funding**
- **a special education component be included in any future provincial budget or Ministry of Education GSN briefs**

Section 4

4. GOING FORWARD

The landscape of special education continues to evolve. The Association would benefit from continuous monitoring of that landscape and ongoing communication and direction to the membership. With the direction of the Special Education Task Force, the Provincial Executive will include a Special Education Issues section, on a biennial basis based on the report of the Special Education Task Force: A Direction for Special Education 2010.

A myriad of subject associations have been established and supported through the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF). The Association supports the establishment of a subject association for Special Education through the Ontario Teachers' Federation. This could serve a number of functions including keeping members up to date in professional knowledge, practice and advocacy.

In addition, the Ministry has two key consultation sources to access when changes are contemplated or feedback is required. These two groups are school board Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) and the Minister's Advisory Committee on Special Education (MACSE). With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association will lobby the Ministry of Education to have OECTA representation on both S.E.A.C. and M.A.C.S.E. Some school boards already have OECTA representation as non-voting members on SEAC. This practice should be replicated across the province. While attaining voting membership would be ideal, this objective is likely more attainable if we pursue the non-voting status. In addition, MACSE has one teacher representative to represent Public, Catholic and French Language Boards, given the highly varied models of special education, this is insufficient. At least one teacher member on MACSE should be created to represent these three distinct interests. Representation from elementary and secondary could be alternated amongst the representatives. As mentioned key decisions and consultations occur through MACSE, increased teacher representation is a necessity. In addition, many new projects/committees start with representation from this committee.

Much of northern Ontario and regions outside of the greater Toronto area (GTA) do not have access to the necessary expertise in many of the fields directly and indirectly linked to special education. Given the tremendous advances in technology, provincial networks could be established to provide teachers with

access to this expertise. While the subject association could be charged with this task, OECTA may consider pursuing this within the association as well.

With direction from the Special Education Task Force, the Association recommends that:

- **the Association support the establishment of a subject association for special education through the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)**
- **the Association lobby the Ministry of Education to have OECTA representation on both S.E.A.C. and M.A.C.S.E. committees**

Section 5

FOOTNOTES

1. **Students with special needs/special education needs** – Current Ministry of Education terminology, instead of special needs students, special education students, exceptional students and other terms. For consistency, was utilized throughout.
2. **Special Education Teacher** – There are two distinct roles under this title. The first role, is a teacher who teaches a class of students with special needs/special education needs. It generally means that they maintain a register for these children. For the purposes of this report, when we are specifically referring to teachers who have these classes they will be identified as special education class teacher.

In the second role, is a teacher who may have an assigned number/caseload of students but they either withdraw the students for a block of time or part of the day, or go into the class and work with the student in the classroom. A classroom teacher would have these students on their register. Across the province this is known by a number of terms, resource, itinerant, Special Education Resource Teacher and others. For the purposes of this report where the distinction was required, they will be referred to as itinerant special education teachers. Generally, where it made sense, the report refers to both as special education teachers.

3. **Assessment** – Assessment would include any assessment undertaken by classroom and/or special education teacher. An intellectual or cognitive assessment usually undertaken by psychological services, is not required to meet this threshold.
4. **Inclusion** – Inclusion is defined as the practice of educating students with special needs in regular classes for all or nearly all of the day instead of in special education classes. Given that one of the Ministry's new initiatives is Equity and Inclusive Education, The Special Education Task Force used this term consistently rather than inclusion, mainstreaming or other euphemisms.
5. **Job embedded** – Job embedded is a term that is most commonly used when talking about professional development opportunities for teachers that occur within the instructional day.

Section 6

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Summary of Recommendations

Appendix B – Exceptionalities and Definitions

APPENDIX A

Summary of Recommendations

1. If assessment information indicates that the student meets the Ministry criteria to be deemed exceptional, the process be an informal one. Ongoing review, at the request of the parent, would occur through the cyclical review process of the IEP.
2. That the Association endorses the following as the model of Special Education in Ontario's Catholic Schools:
 - a) Inclusion in the classroom, with support, should be the first consideration
 - b) There is a place for all our students in the regular classroom setting with support
 - c) However, for some students with special needs/special education needs, at a particularly challenging time in their lives, this is contraindicated
3. That the Association lobby the Ministry of Labour to ensure labour laws relevant to working with students with special needs/special education needs are implemented in school boards and any incidents are judiciously reported.
4. When a student, with special needs/special education needs spends any time in class with age-appropriate peers, the student should be counted for all class size purposes.
5. Students with special needs/special education needs are placed in a classroom/subject period, they should be distributed equally across classes, subjects, periods etc.
6. The issue of equitable distribution of students across all sections of a course, be forwarded to OECTA's Collective Bargaining Department to address this, specifically, at the secondary level, particularly in Open and K courses
7. The special education class size, for each exceptionality outlined in Regulation 298 is the 'absolute' maximum in each class.
8. If a class contains more than one type of exceptional student, the class size should be the lowest class size applicable of the exceptionalities present, as outlined in Regulation 298.

9. The Collective Bargaining Department and the Collective Bargaining Committee establish the removal of principals and vice-principals being assigned/placed in the special education teacher role as a bargaining priority for the 2012 round of negotiations
10. The maximum caseload for a full-time, itinerant, special education teacher be set at 20 students.
11. The Association will undertake workload survey of special education teachers fulfilling special class and itinerant roles.
12. The Association will develop a special education PD framework at the local and provincial levels. The framework would incorporate the specifics outlined on pages 16 and 17 of this report.
13. The Association will lobby the Ministry for additional professional development days as a means to implement the pertinent items from the special education PD framework.
14. The Association will implement a tracking measure to ensure that boards follow the Ministry directive regarding PD days dedicated to special education.
15. OECTA, through Teacher Education committees, OTF and other channels, will encourage faculties to undertake the following, as the minimum standard for students in the faculties of education:
 - instruction in current, sound pedagogy and evidence based practices regarding special education
 - one placement working with students with special needs, in either a classroom or special class setting
16. The Association lobby the Ontario College of Teachers and the Deans of the Faculties of Education to ensure that this standard is adopted.
17. Lobby for the creation and implementation of a designated professional development pathway and a differentiated NTIP pathway, for beginning teachers fulfilling a Special Education teacher role.

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18. That the Association advance the following practices concerning the use of technology for students with special needs/special education needs and teachers:
 - i. All students have equal access to hardware and software necessary to support their learning. Advocating for this right will assist teachers to more successfully meet student needs
 - ii. All teachers are provided with training during the instructional day on technology and ways to utilize it to deliver curriculum. Professional development days dedicated to special education could provide additional time for such training. At the elbow technology support should be available during such training
 - iii. All newly built schools comply to a minimum technological standard including wireless access throughout the building
 - iv. Students who require highly specialized medical equipment and interventions (e.g., external pacemakers, breathing tubes, occupational therapy, nursing etc.) be supported by trained medical staff funded through the Ministry of Health
 - v. All textbooks, which are on the Ministry of Education's Trillium list, are made available in a variety of electronic formats (at least three) as a condition of inclusion on the list. The three formats should ensure the widest access for students with technological access needs. (e.g., for students who are blind/visually impaired, Daisy would be the suitable format)
 - vi. The Ministry pursues centralized purchase/lease of computer hardware and software. Given the rate of advancement, it seems the most fiscally responsible route to pursue
 19. Any classroom assessment by either the teacher or by the special education teacher should be authentic and only undertaken to inform practice (instruction, program implementation, etc.).
 20. The review components of IPRCs occur within the context of IEP review.
 21. Initiating an IEP that contains accommodations only is not necessary and should not be a requirement for elementary or secondary students with special needs/special education needs.
 22. Teachers discontinue the practice of creating an IEP for students who are achieving at Level 1, 2, 3, or 4 of their current grade level, without modifications to the curriculum.
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23. A number of current practices related to IEP development, review and updating, require major revisions.
24. The Association lobby the Ministry of Education to:
 - revise the IEP standard to align with the progress/midterm report
 - revise the requirement to review the IEP from three times to twice in the elementary panel
 - similarly, revise the requirement to review the IEP three times to twice in the secondary panel
25. The IEP serve as the both the program and the report card to parents, for students whose program is solely alternative expectations.
26. Given that IEP development, assessment and IPRCs are components of a special education teacher role, we pursue through collective bargaining processes, teachers fulfilling a special education teacher role (either itinerant or special class teacher) have time for these components (i.e., IEP development, assessment and IPRCs) of their job regularly scheduled on their timetable
27. The Association continue to pursue a collective bargaining objective which has dedicated time, outside of planning/preparation time, for classroom/subject and special education teachers to collaborate on the program and progress of students with special needs/special education needs
28. The Association will meet with the Ministry to ensure/monitor that each board complies with the directions contained in the Ministry of Education Transition Planning documents
29. The Ministry of Education direct boards to establish parameters for transition planning at all levels.
30. The Ministry initiate and maintain an OSR database to ensure key student information is readily available to boards/teachers upon entering a student's Ontario Education Number (OEN).
31. The Association lobby the government to re-establish the weighting factor as a component of Special Incidence Portion funding.
32. The Association lobby the government to have a voice at the Tri-Ministry table.

33. The Association undertake an education initiative, perhaps as part of the Collective Bargaining regional sessions, to ensure that unit presidents and chief negotiators monitor board funding of technology coincides with the level provided for in the revised SEA grant per pupil amount and other components of SEA funding.
34. OECTA will include a special education component in any future provincial budget or Ministry of Education GSN briefs.
35. The OECTA Provincial Executive will include a Special Education Issues section, on a biennial basis based on the report of the Special Education Task Force: A Direction for Special Education.
36. OECTA support the establishment of a subject association for Special Education through the Ontario Teachers' Federation.
37. The Association will lobby the Ministry of Education to have OECTA representation on both S.E.A.C. and M.A.C.S.E. committees.

APPENDIX B

Exceptionalities and Definitions

BEHAVIOURAL:

A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance, and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following: an inability to build or maintain interpersonal relationships; excessive fears or anxieties; a tendency to compulsive reaction; an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof.

COMMUNICATION:

- **Autism**

Disorders that are characterized by deficits and impairments in multiple areas of development. They include impairment in social interaction, communication and the presence of restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, interests and activities. The specific disorders significantly interfere with the student's academic and social functioning in the educational setting. The disorders, as diagnosed by a qualified practitioner, may include Autistic Disorder, Rett's Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Asperger's Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified.

- **Deaf/Hard of Hearing**

An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.

- **Language Impaired**

A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal communication or the written word or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical or sensory factors, and which may involve one or more of the form, content and function of language in communication and include one or more of language delay; dysfluency, voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.

- **Speech Impairment**

A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical or sensory factors, that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

- **Learning Disabilities**

A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication, and that is characterized by a condition that is not primarily the result of vision impairment; impairment of hearing; physical disability; developmental disability; primary emotional disturbance; cultural difference. The condition results in a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and processes [thinking, conceptualizing, integrating]; expressive language [talking, spelling, writing]; mathematical computations; and may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as a perceptual handicap; a brain injury; minimal brain dysfunction; dyslexia; and developmental aphasia.

INTELLECTUAL:

- **Gifted**

An unusually advanced degree of generally intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.

- **Mild Intellectual Disability**

A learning disorder characterized by: an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and supportive service; an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development; a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment and economic self-support.

- **Developmental Disability**

A severe learning disorder characterized by an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development; an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development; a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment and economic self-support.

PHYSICAL:

- **Physical**

A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or developmental level.

- **Blind/Low Vision**

A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

MULTIPLE:

A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such a nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments or disabilities.



OECTA, 65 St. Clair Avenue East, Toronto, ON M4T 2Y8 • www.oecta.on.ca