
14.5.1 Amendments to Special Education Plan 2025-2026

We have a number of serious concerns about the [TDSB's proposed amendments to the Special Education Plan for 2025-2026](#). **Most pressing are the proposed increases to class size in the TDSB's most complex classrooms serving students. There is absolutely no pedagogically or ethically sound reason to make such a move.**

TDSB Senior Staff continuously respond to concerns in the area of Special Education as if teachers and students have an abundance of support in the classroom. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ask any teacher, educational assistant, or parent, especially those in Diagnostic Kindergarten, MID or DD classes, or congregated sites, and you will receive a much different picture than that given by the TDSB.

TDSB Senior Staff have reassured Trustees that special education has retained the same amount of funding, so there are no proposed cuts. What is clear is that staff do not see the increase of class sizes, collapse of programs, increase of teacher-to-student ratios, and the reduction in student supports as “cuts.” But do not be fooled:

- The student numbers in Special Education are **down**. We question why this is the case. What we do know is that the TDSB has created significantly more onerous paperwork (e.g. the ILP) and procedures for bringing students forward to internal Team meetings (IST and SST) which is the first step toward identifying needs and an exceptionality.
- Ask any Teacher how they would go about accessing additional human resources - an EA, a Special Needs Assistant, a CYW for example. They will tell you of their endless advocacy with little to no Board response; of spending hours each day filling out health and safety forms and ABC logs to no avail; of the Board triaging scarce supports and EAs and SNA's run off their feet between students who pose a risk to themselves and other students because they don't have the supports they require; that situations need to be at an absolute breaking point in their classroom for any additional supports to be provided and even then, for mere weeks. They will tell you of their daily guilt at not having the resources to meet the needs of their students, and the injuries they've sustained.
- Special Education funding has remained **stagnant**, with no reductions in spending planned for next year.

- **But TDSB is proposing to increase class sizes** in some of the most complex classrooms serving students with complex and multiple exceptionalities. This is a human rights issue, and will put teachers and students at further risk of injury.
- **Why reduce student support if enrolment is down and funding is the same?**

Teachers faced with these increased class sizes are sounding the alarm: larger class sizes mean students will receive less support and attention, and this increases the risk of injury, violence, and elopement. But when asked about the increase to class size without additional supports at the June 16 FBEC meeting, staff responded “We don’t see it as overly challenging for our educators.” This is a callous and dismissive response. Where is the consultation? Surely the consensus of parents, caregivers, and teachers was not to increase class sizes and reduce supports. **Parents, trustees, teachers, and students deserve to know what is driving these cuts to special education supports.**

1. Cuts to Student Supports

The proposed amendments are full of cuts to vital student supports. For example:

- the elimination of the Behaviour Intervention Prevention Team.¹ While we welcome additional Board supports for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), this should not come *at the expense* of supports for students with a broader range of behavioural needs.²
- the removal of Behaviour Intensive Support Programs (ISPs), eliminating access to developmental and inclusion supports for students with the exceptionality of behaviour.³ Students in these programs currently receive support at 2:8 staff to class size ratio. Without these programs, placing students into a Grade 5 classroom with 30 students and one Teacher will exponentially reduce the specialized attention that can be provided.
- The Board has not indicated in any way how additional supports will be provided in a regular classroom placement.
- Cuts to Social Workers, CYC’s

Various proposed amendments also make it more difficult for students (and their parents/guardians/caregivers) to access supports, by increasing requirements for documentation,⁴ assessments,⁵ and vague “eligibility” criteria.⁶ This is making a bad situation worse, as Staff have reported that enrolment in Special Education programs has decreased by 2300 students. We know that the need for these supports remains, but parents are finding it harder to access them. In the realm of developmental delays or disabilities, however, it is proposed that a formal diagnosis

¹ *Amendments*, pages 16, 32–34.

² *Amendments*, page 11.

³ *Amendments*, pages 25–28.

⁴ *Amendments*, page 29.

⁵ *Amendments*, page 14, 28–29.

⁶ *Amendments*, pages 28, 31

is no longer required—which increases chances of misclassification and poor student support. We also note the elimination of Special Incidence Portion (SIP) Claims from the Board’s Plan.⁷

2. Increasing Class Sizes

Most concerning to parents, teachers, and education workers are the unacceptable proposals to increase class sizes in classrooms serving students with multiple and complex needs. Specifically:

- Increase to Diagnostic Kindergarten classrooms (DK) from 8 to 10 students. These are classrooms where students may present with multiple exceptionalities, pre-verbal, sometimes in diapers, and experience significant developmental delays. We understand that the rationale (given by staff at the [June 4 Finance, Budget, and Enrolment Committee meeting](#)) behind this increase to class size is to broaden access to ISPs. We agree that all students who require ISPs should be able to access them, but we reject that this access should come at the expense of crucial supports for our students who need it most. Increasing the class size in these complex contexts would have serious negative outcomes for students and staff—this is not to mention parents and students who have already been promised smaller class sizes.
- Increase to class size for Intensive Support Programs (ISPs) serving students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities and Learning Disabilities.⁸
- As well, the emphasis on *primary* exceptionalities (and sidelining multiple exceptionalities beyond it) both underserves children with multiple and complex needs, but is also a way of increasing class size. There is strong evidence suggesting that smaller class size has a positive impact on students with the greatest educational needs, particularly those with multiple and complex exceptionalities.

3. Staffing Cuts

Across the province, 86% of elementary teachers that work in special education have experienced violence in the classroom, or witnessed it against another staff person.⁹ This is a direct result of the terrible lack of student resources and supports. Reducing staffing (and increasing class size) in special education will only make this issue worse. We see in the amendments reductions to vital staff in multiple areas, including the removal of the Behavioural Prevention Intervention team,¹⁰ the removal of Child and Youth Counsellors and Training Assistants from Autism Services Teams,¹¹ and changes to who is on the AT/SEA team. We note the removal of references to “anti-oppression” and PR699 in the outline of the Special Education

⁷ *Amendments*, page 9.

⁸ *Amendments*, page 40.

⁹ [ETFO member survey shows violence pervasive in schools](#)

¹⁰ *Amendments*, pages 16, 32–34.

¹¹ *Amendments*, pages 39–40.

and Inclusion ASD Itinerant Teacher role.¹² We also note the elimination of specific reference to the following positions: School Improvement Coaches, Early Literacy Coaches, and Guidance Coaches from the Board’s organizational structure—though we understand that these positions *may* have just been re-categorized.¹³ It is unclear what the Board’s intention is by eliminating reference to these vital positions. The Board Special Education Staffing allocations for 2025-2026 have not been released yet, but the cuts to the above positions and the increases in class size suggest that further proposed reductions in staffing may be coming too.

4. Increased Workload

Finally, we see many proposed amendments that increase the workload on teaching staff, by either adding to their responsibilities or downloading responsibilities (e.g. from Principals to MARTs). Teachers, especially in special education, are already asked to do far more with far less in our underfunded public education system—we are disappointed to see many additions to teacher workload in the amendments. Increased workload in these areas will decrease the time that teachers have to do what they do best: helping students thrive. The imposition of 6-8 weeks for the implementation of ISTs¹⁴ will increase workload. The increased responsibilities for Special Education and Inclusion Consultants (SEIC) on ASD Teams¹⁵ will increase workload. The addition of MART and SERT involvement (where Principals/Vice-Principals and SEICs are already involved) will increase workload. The required involvement of SEICs in IPRC annual reviews¹⁶ will increase workload, hold up the process, and potentially delay the SST meetings they must already attend. The assessment process (re: eligibility for supports) may also put more workload on teaching staff. These are just some examples, but the message in these amendments seems to be that time supporting students will continue to be eroded by increased demands on teachers who are already being stretched thin.

¹² *Amendments*, page 11.

¹³ *Amendments*, page 7.

¹⁴ *Amendments*, page 6.

¹⁵ *Amendments*, page 10.

¹⁶ *Amendments*, page 24.