

Autism P.D.D.

A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:

- a) Disturbances in:
 - (i) rate of educational development
 - (ii) ability to relate to the environment
 - (iii) motility
 - (iv) perception, speech, and language
 - b) Lack of the representational-symbolic behaviour that precedes language.
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CRITERIA: Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) by qualified professional.

PLACEMENTS: Delivered by or with the support of the Special Education Teacher:

- Resource in Class
- Withdrawal
- Self-contained classes (elementary/primary), two schools only

PROGRAM: Social Communication Program (Elementary and Secondary panels)
Delivered in home school, except for ASD classes, with appropriate supports and services

SERVICES: Available in Elementary and Secondary Panels
(unless otherwise indicated)

- Speech/Language Services
- Behaviour Resource Services
- Physical Management Services
- Psychological Services
- Special Ed Consultant (*elementary*)
- Special Program Teacher (*secondary*)
- Special Ed Department Head (*secondary*)

SPECIAL PROGRAM – AUTISM (Social Communication Program)

Students aged 4 – 21 years with a diagnosis of autism/pervasive developmental disorder are enrolled in their home school on a regular classroom register, usually with age-appropriate peers. They have a program focused to provide specialized instruction to students who have significant difficulties relating to their environment and acquiring the full range of academic skills. The individualized program supports ongoing needs such as communication, sensory-motor integration, anxiety and appropriate behaviours. Implementation of the uniquely designed program is a collaboration between classroom teacher and Core Resource (special education) teacher with additional supports, as required. Mode of delivery ranges from resource withdrawal to special class full time (primary grades).

Each school is serviced by a Board resource team that supports the school staff working with these students. This multidisciplinary team includes a special education program consultant and/or department head and a representative from each of the Board's services.

In consideration of very divergent needs of students diagnosed with Autism/PDD, during the 2004-2005 school year two ASD classes were implemented which created a special class full-time for students with autism/pervasive developmental disorder who are experiencing significant/severe difficulty and require a more intensive, congregated setting with appropriate resources, for significant portions of their school day.

These students are not able to sit and attend due to a number of factors including body organization difficulties, the stimuli in the room and the communication expectations. As a result, at present they are not able to learn in the environment and inhibit the learning of others. Within the congregated setting, it is hoped that the students will be able to focus on a few main areas of development.

Examples of requisite skills that may need to be learned are:

- a) acquiring skills of daily living, i.e. toileting, dressing, eating
- b) classroom routines
- c) social awareness
- d) communication
- e) initiating requests for assistance
- f) negotiating the classroom environment
- g) familiarizing self with the school environment
- h) adapting the grade 1-3 program

The goal of the program is to assist students in the development of skills in the aforementioned areas.

PRIMARY PDD CLASSES

For the 2004-2005 school year, two pilot primary PDD classes became permanent. The students will spend two years in a self-contained class, with integration as appropriate. The students were in SK, Gr. 1 or Grade 2 when they were placed in the centre. Each centre contains 5 students. The program for the students focuses on:

- a) acquiring skills of daily living, i.e. toileting, dressing, eating
- b) classroom routines
- c) social awareness
- d) communication
- e) initiating requests for assistance
- f) negotiating the classroom environment
- g) familiarizing self with the school environment
- h) acquiring early literacy and numeracy skills

One space, at each site, is held as a short term placement for a student or school in need. The student and the Educational Assistant assigned to the student will come to the centre for approximately two months. This placement is intended to assist the student in acquiring skills and to provide training for the Educational Assistant.

Admission, Selection Committee and other components of the original pilot remain.

BACKGROUND

The mission statement of the York Catholic District School Board stresses the education of each student to reach full potential in a dynamic, Christ-centred learning community.

CRITERIA FOR ADMITTANCE

1. Current population:
Prior to consideration for admittance, a school will have:
 - consulted with parents and in-school resource staff and all pertinent members of the area resource team
 - attempted a range of curriculum modifications /accommodations as outlined in IEP prepared for the ISA claim process
 - established appropriate timetables and communication systems
 - presented student to case conference with area resource staff
 - recommended the involvement of community agencies to the family or been involved in a relationship with community agencies
 - voluntary withdrawal or a modified school day may have been initiated in response to safety concerns
 - involvement and commitment by parents/guardians