

## SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

December 2016



### Inclusion of Exceptional Students

Harvest exists for the nurture, care, and education of covenant youth. All these children, irrespective of ability or handicap, belong to the community of church and school. Therefore, as much as possible, all should receive the covenantal education desired by their parents. Experience from within Harvest and from other schools reveals that the enrolment of exceptional children is indeed a blessing for the students and the school community as a whole. Exceptional children need to be given the opportunity to be an important part of the community of God's people.

### Special Education Support

For the inclusion of an exceptional student to work effectively, support for all involved is essential.

- a) **Students:** support should be available for peers of the exceptional student to grow in knowledge and understanding of the exceptionality. They will need to learn when and how to assist the exceptional student effectively and to understand the specific challenges facing him/her.
- b) **Teachers:** those involved with the exceptional student will also need support in the form of information concerning teaching techniques and practical skills. Teachers should take advantage of opportunities for training or assistance from a specialist.
- c) **Community:** communication with the broader community is important. Members of the school community should have the opportunity to attend information sessions so that they too may grow in knowledge and understanding of exceptionalities.
- d) **Parents:** parents of the exceptional student should have the complete support of the school community. This includes the financial implications of inclusion and integration.

*Source: "Special Education Model for Reformed Schools" – report, ASC Ad-Hoc Committee, June 2008*

### External Referral Procedure

#### Preparation for Enrolment:

Possible enrolment of exceptional children requires thorough decision-making and careful planning. The following procedure shall be followed:

#### 1. Referral Initiation

- a) **Parental Request:** The parents/guardians of an exceptional student shall approach the school with the request to enroll their child at least two years in advance, whenever possible. The school will advise the parents/guardian to make a formal request to the Board. The parents/guardians shall provide all adequate information regarding the child's abilities, limitations, and special needs. In addition, a list of names and addresses of support personnel would be helpful (i.e. medical).
- b) **School Response:** The Board will pass the request on to the Principal.
- c) **Discussions:** The Principal will form a Review Committee. This committee will identify the child's exceptionalities by reviewing the information given in the request. This may include contacting medical support personnel after receiving written permission from the parents to do so. The committee will evaluate the request for enrollment by determining the best possible program that Harvest can offer the student, and what training, personnel, resources, transportation arrangements, etc., are needed to implement such a plan. A major point of discussion will be the degree to which the student can be integrated into the regular classroom program given proper support and training for all parties. The school must be willing to stretch in new directions, and the parents must be willing to accept reasonable limitations in this regard. The program will be devised in such a way as to maximize regular classroom

opportunities while also recognizing that some of the student's needs may be best met through alternate programming. The Review Committee will explore possible assistance from the local Community Care Access Centre. A conditional program will then be offered to the parents of the exceptional student.

- d) **Parental Acceptance:** The parents of the exceptional child will decide whether or not the conditional program offered satisfies the needs of their child at that time. The final approval of the program will be subject to Board endorsement of the proposal.
- e) **Proposal:** Upon the parents' acceptance of the program, the program will be sent, via the principal; to the Education Committee and then to the Board (by the Education Committee liaison). If the Board approves the proposal, enrollment occurs and preparations begin. As with other student enrollment, this enrollment is not subject to annual review, although placement and programming will be reviewed by the Review Committee annually.

## **2. Placement**

Once the appropriate placement has been made instructional planning can begin.

## **Internal Referral Procedure**

Monitoring the progress of students is an ongoing process. Because of the continuing evaluation taking place in the classroom, the classroom teacher, after consultation with the principal is primarily responsible for initiating a referral for assessment. The parents and/or the principal may also initiate the request.

### **1. Referral Initiation**

- a) Request for assessment is initiated by the classroom teacher, parents and/or principal to be done by the person hired for this task.
- b) The principal authorizes the commencement of the assessment activities.
- d) Oral consent is obtained from the parents to carry out the assessment of their child.

### **2. Purpose of Assessment**

Once a referral has been made and permission from the parents has been received, the assessment will take place in the school by an outside professional. In making the assessment, it is the assessor's responsibility to accumulate data concerning the child's competencies and learning styles, as well as what the child has learned and failed to learn. The purpose of this assessment is to gain all the information possible about the child and the child's performance. This information should aid in a better understanding of the child and lead to more effective instruction either in the classroom or in the Special Education program.

The results of the individual assessment will be evaluated and the needs of the child determined. Rather than this being the responsibility of one person, a Support Team will be formed to evaluate the assessment.

When external testing is deemed necessary, options for testing will be presented to the parents. The cost of this additional testing may have to be shared by the Board and the parents.

### **3. Placement**

The Support Team will recommend the appropriate placement for the student. If, after evaluation of all external assessments, the Team determines the need to place the student in a Special Education program, the classroom teacher will develop an IEP, the principal will form a Review Committee, and begin the program. Communication with the Special Education liaison on the Education Committee will be maintained.

### **4. Continuous Assessment and Review**

On the basis of the instructional plan, regular evaluation and assessment will take place to ascertain whether the set goals/objectives are being achieved. It is important that these assessments describe both the learning strategies that were successful, as well as those that were not (yet) successful. Support Team meetings will be held when needed for all children receiving assistance, whether on an IEP or not. Review Committee meetings will be held once per term, or at least twice per year. The student's

classroom work and outside classroom work (with an aide or volunteer) will serve as the basis of discussion for these meetings. Review Committee meetings will also be scheduled during the last week of August to discuss the needs of the students who will continue on an IEP in the upcoming school year.

## 5. Reporting and Parent Contact

In order to develop a better understanding of the learning capabilities of the exceptional student, detailed reports are essential. These reports, therefore, must include specific objectives and an attitudinal, and performance evaluation of the student. This report will form the basis of discussions with the parents. The classroom teacher will provide a formal report (mainly anecdotal) that will be added to the classroom report card for each reporting period. Some account of communication with the parents and other service providers should be available (whether verbal or written) for the Support Team to access. The student will remain the responsibility of the classroom teacher.

## Special Education Definitions

The following terms are used in this document and throughout the Special Education program at Harvest, and are to be understood according to these definitions. However, it should also be understood that all options/supports/services listed below are not necessarily available on a given school year.

**Exceptional Students:** The term "exceptional students" will be used for students who experience a particular disability or have a particular exceptionality. The Ontario Ministry of Education defines exceptional students as "All students who have behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities\*, and/or who may have educational needs that cannot be met through regular instructional practices."

\*The Ministry commonly uses the term 'learning disorder' to describe some areas of exceptionality. A **learning disorder** (sometimes called a learning disability) is a life-long condition with varying levels of severity that affects one or more of the ways that a person takes in, stores, or uses information (see the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario at [www.ldao.ca](http://www.ldao.ca)). The Ministry describes the five exceptionalities as follows:

- a) **Behavioural exceptionality:** A learning disorder characterized by specific behavioural problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance.
- b) **Communicational exceptionality:** A learning disorder inclusive of autism; hearing, language or speech impairment; or a disability involving the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication.
- c) **Intellectual exceptionality:** Giftedness, mild intellectual disability or developmental disability.
- d) **Physical exceptionality:** A condition of such severe physical limitations 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 development level.
- e) **Multiple exceptionalities:** 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.

**Special Education Teacher:** A teacher who has additional training and/or experience in the education of exceptional students, and whose tasks might include teaching such students, designing accommodated, modified and alternate programs, writing IEPs, (see later entry) acting as a resource person for other teachers, and serving on an IPRC (see later entry).

**Educational Assistant (EA):** An assistant to the classroom or special education teacher in the education of an exceptional student, usually a student whose learning needs are being met through a modified or alternate program (and for whom, therefore, an IEP has been written). An EA is to be distinguished from a TA.

**Teacher's Assistant (TA):** An assistant to the classroom teacher in the education of all the students generally. A TA provides general classroom support in such tasks as assisting individual students, monitoring group activities, supervising seat work, marking, and other such activities.

**Personal Support Worker (PSW):** A person whose primary responsibility is to provide personal care and assistance to an exceptional student, especially, but not exclusively, in regard to physical needs (toileting, feeding, mobility, work station activities). A student's PSW may or may not be the same person as the student's EA.

**Special Education Program:** The Ontario Ministry of Education defines a special education program as "An educational program that is based on and modified by the results of a continuous assessment and evaluation of the pupil and that includes an IEP outlining specific objectives and necessary educational services." In this document, we understand the Ministry definition to mean what is described below as a modified program and an alternate program. We extend the Ministry definition to include an accommodated program.

**Accommodated Program:** An educational program in which changes are made to the delivery method and/or assessment method and/or environment of the regular course, subject and/or space to meet the student's strengths and needs. An accommodated program, however, does not change the learning expectations of the course /subject.

**Modified Program:** An educational program in which significant changes are made to grade level expectations for a subject /course to meet the needs of the student. They include expectations from a different grade level and/or significant changes to the number and/or complexity of the learning expectations. A student in a modified program will have an IEP.

**Alternate Program:** An educational program involving learning expectations not derived from or based on any level of the regular curriculum and not leading to credit. Alternate expectations are outlined on an IEP.

**Transition Plan:** A plan for exceptional children that assists the students, their parents and their teachers to facilitate a smooth transition from elementary to secondary school, and from secondary school into the work force, a post-secondary institution or another program, as appropriate. The plan should include specific, realistic goals (and actions required), timelines, and personnel responsible for or involved in providing assistance. The plan should be based upon the strengths, interests and needs of the student.

**Inclusion:** The acceptance into the school of any child of appropriate age from within the supporting community of the school, regardless of behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities.

**Integration:** The devising of accommodated, modified or alternate programs for exceptional students in a way that maximizes regular classroom setting opportunities but also meets the learning needs of the student.

**Withdrawal:** The planned relocation of an exceptional student for a percentage of the school day from the regular classroom setting to the resource room, for the purpose of meeting specific learning objectives that cannot be achieved in the regular classroom setting and that are outlined in the student's accommodated, modified or alternate program.

**Resource Room:** A classroom staffed by special education personnel, with available resources and space, designated for students withdrawn from the regular classroom for long- or short-term assistance. \*

*\*Taken and adapted from the Special Education Model for Reformed Schools pg. 6. (Produced by the ad-Hoc committee of ASC (Assistance to the Special Child Committee).)*

**Review Committee:** The Review Committee is a group consisting of the principal, the classroom teacher, and the parents of the exceptional student (this committee could also potentially consist of special education volunteers and EA's). The principal will call the Review Committee meetings. The principal, or his designate, will chair the Review Committee meetings, while the Classroom Teacher will prepare minutes and reports.

**The Review Committee will:**

- a) familiarize itself with the exceptional student's strengths and needs as referred to them through the External Referral Procedure or as referred from the Support Team through the Internal Referral Procedure;
- b) determine suitable program placement;
- c) review the placement and progress of students in the Special Education program.

**Support Team:** The Support Team is a group consisting of the Special Education teacher, the principal, the classroom teacher and possibly the E.A. Parents of the student under discussion may attend the Support Team meetings.

**The Support Team will:**

- a) evaluate classroom work and assessment reports and determine whether further testing is necessary;
- b) determine degree of program adaptation, based on informal and/or formal discussion;
- c) determine the level of assistance required, (including the use of an Occupational Therapist (O.T.), Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) Physiotherapist (PT), if deemed necessary);
- d) place the student in a program to suit his/her needs;
- e) develop a Student Profile using the Student Profile form; \*
- f) develop an Instructional Plan using the IEP template. The Special Education Teacher, in consultation with other members of the Support Team, will be responsible for developing and maintaining an IEP. The parents of the student could be part of the team at this stage. Parents of students on IEPs, as well as all members of the support team, will receive a copy of the IEP.

**Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** The Individual Education Plan is the school's written plan of action for the exceptional student. According to the Ministry of Education and Training, the IEP "is a working document which describes the strengths and needs of an individual exceptional pupil, the special education program and services established to meet the pupil's needs, and how the program and services will be delivered. It also describes the student's progress."

**The IEP will consist of:**

- a) a profile of the student, including a history of his/her social, emotional, medical, physical, behavioural, and academic development.
- b) a description of the strengths of the student at the time of writing;
- c) a list of the long term and immediate objectives of the program; the latter are to be arranged in such a way that evaluation can take place at least two times per term;
- d) a list of strategies and activities to be used to achieve the objectives; these are to be arranged in such a way that regular notes on progress can be added in an anecdotal form;
- e) a summative evaluation of progress made at every reporting period.

## **ADVANCEMENT POLICY**

Parents or school personnel may initiate the consideration of grade advancement for a child who demonstrates exceptional achievement and social/emotional maturity, only after the child has been enrolled in Harvest. The same procedure will be followed as in the case of an Internal Referral for Special Education (See Special Education Policy – Internal Referral Procedure).

The Support Team will identify the child's academic exceptionalities as well as his or her social and emotional maturity and determine a placement. Whenever possible, the child will remain in the age appropriate grade and placed on an Individual Education Plan. However, in exceptional circumstances, i.e., profound academic achievement across all subject areas and psychosocial readiness, the child may be advanced to the next grade. If advancement occurs, a review will be done by the Support Team within a year to determine if any further support is needed.



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Principal: Mr. J. Meinen

Parental Notification

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

As was discussed with you previously, your son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ has been experiencing some difficulties in the area(s) of

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

After discussion with the CCAC and/or after observations in the classroom, we feel that \_\_\_\_\_ would benefit from receiving extra individual or small group help outside of the classroom.

This assistance will be provided \_\_\_\_\_ times weekly for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes each session, and will be scheduled with as little disruption to the daily routine as possible. We can begin providing this extra help as soon as you return this form with your signature.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at the school.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Classroom Teacher)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Volunteer Learning Assistant)

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To: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read your notice about learning Assistance for my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent's signature)