



Specialized Services Program Update



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Department Goal

Grand Erie is committed to fostering success and independence for each student by promoting and embedding human rights, anti-discrimination, inclusive design, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and accessibility principles, approaches, and actions in all aspects of services and learning environments. Within classrooms, the use of culturally relevant, responsive and sustainable pedagogy (CRRSP) and differentiated instruction (DI), assessment, and evaluation to support students in their learning areis expected.

As a district, staff recognize each student's the talents, gifts, and abilities of each student within schools. The intersectional identities each student brings with them are celebrated and acknowledged, which validates the richness of their experiences and values and honours their whole self.

Students with special education strengths and different learning abilities are supported in inclusive classroom environments that enable them to develop to their potential. Staff emphasize the inclusion of students and provide meaningful, individualized integration opportunities for students accessing special education programs. Students' different learning abilities are served through a variety of programs, placements, and class types, with most students with special education strengths and needs accessing programming through regular class placement, the goal being obtaining an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or Ontario Secondary School Certificate.

Providing barrier-free, meaningful educational opportunities for students with special education needs is based on guiding principles outlined in Standard 2 of Grand Erie's Special Education Plan.

Department Data

Specialized Services Overview:

- Approximately 16% of Grand Erie students receive special education supports and/or services
- 4,434 students have IEPs/individualized programming
- 379 students access full or partially contained placement

Exceptionalities by Identification and Grade

Exceptionality	Total
Behaviour	36
Communication - Autism	279
Communication – Deaf and Hard of Hearing	8
Communication – Language Impairment	39
Communication – Speech Impairment	3
Communication – Learning Disability	561
Intellectual - Giftedness	43
Intellectual Mild intellectual Disability	230
Intellectual-Developmental Disability	113
Physical Disability	19
Blind and Low Vision	3
Multiple	266
No Identification	2,834

Department Data

IEPs by Grade

Grade													
K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
34	61	89	160	275	315	384	349	445	515	499	617	691	4,434

Specialized Services collaborates with Curriculum and Student Achievement to in assisting school staff in supporting to support students with disabilities and neurodiversities as they prepare for and complete the EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office) (EQAO) assessments. Supports are tailored to address the unique learning requirements of students with various exceptionalities, ensuring they have equitable access to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in:

- Grade 3 and 6 Reading, Writing, and Mathematics
- Grade 9 Mathematics
- Grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

Learning Resource Teachers were provided with opportunities to learn about learning progressions and responsive instruction to support students with diverse learning needs participating in the EQAO assessments. This learning included in this learning were reviews of the Ontario Curriculum, and resources such as Mathology, Knowledgehook, and Grand Erie's Math Long Range Plans.

Key support strategies for students include:

Individualized accommodations: Aligning the accommodations the student required by the student as indicated in the IEP with the directions in the EQAO Administration Guide.

Assistive technology: Offering access to, and developing skills in, the using of accessibility tools that support reading, writing, and/or mathematical calculations.

Practice sessions: Familiarizing students with test formats and procedures to reduce anxiety and improve confidence.

Collaborative planning: Engaging Learning Resource Teachers, classroom teachers, and support staff to create comprehensive preparation strategies.

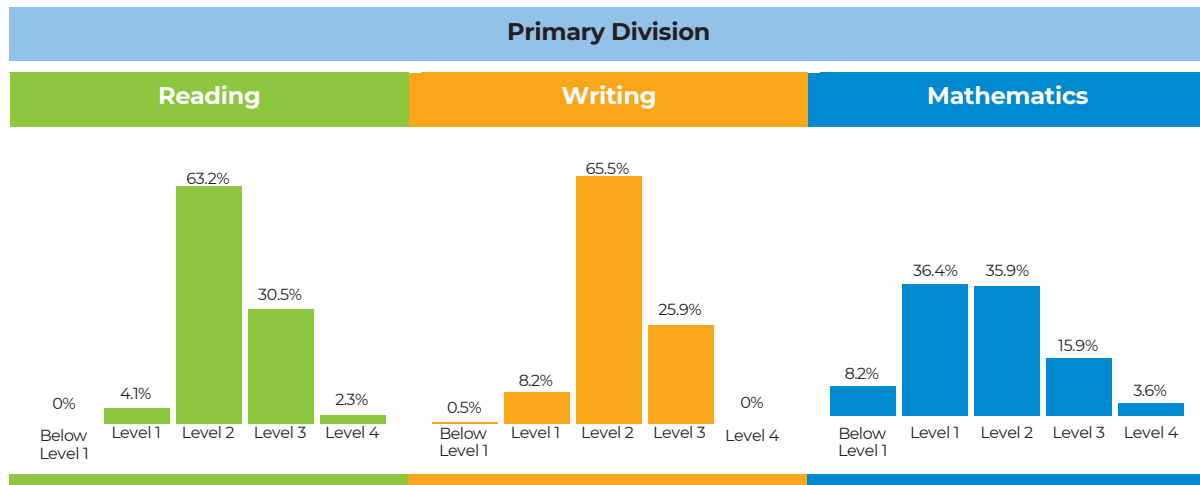
Ongoing progress monitoring: Regularly assessing student progress to adjust support strategies as needed.

Department Data

Types of IEPs in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 10 in 2024-25

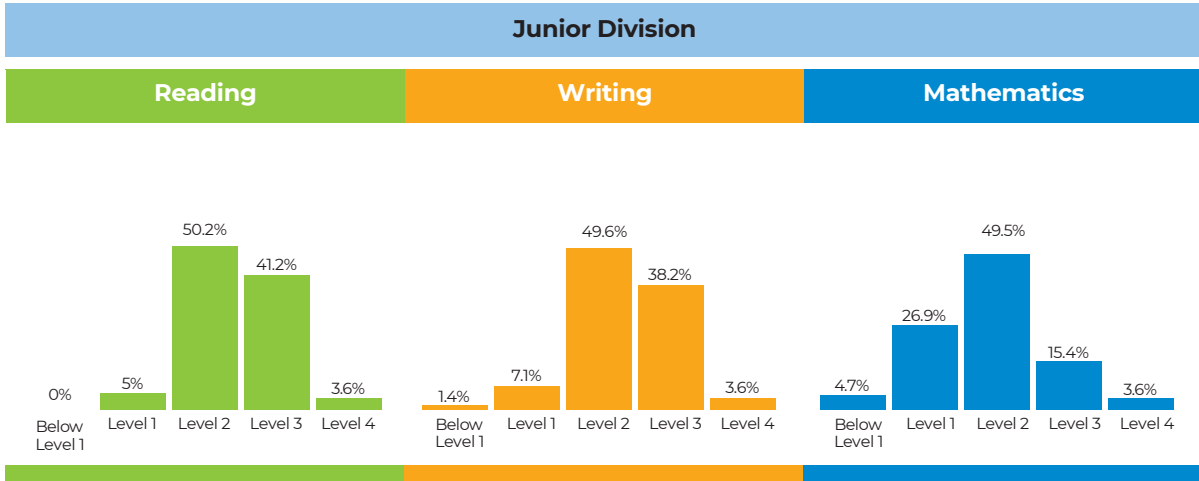
Types of IEPs for Students in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 10	Number of Students 2024-25
IEPs Grade 3 – Accommodated	120
IEPs Grade 3 – Modified	32
IEPs Grade 6 – Accommodated	237
IEPs Grade 6 – Modified	136
IEPs Grade 9 – Accommodated	49
IEPs Grade 9 – Modified	5
IEPs Grade 10 – Accommodated	34
IEPs Grade 10 – Modified	0

EQAO Results for Students with Special Education Needs – Primary Assessment

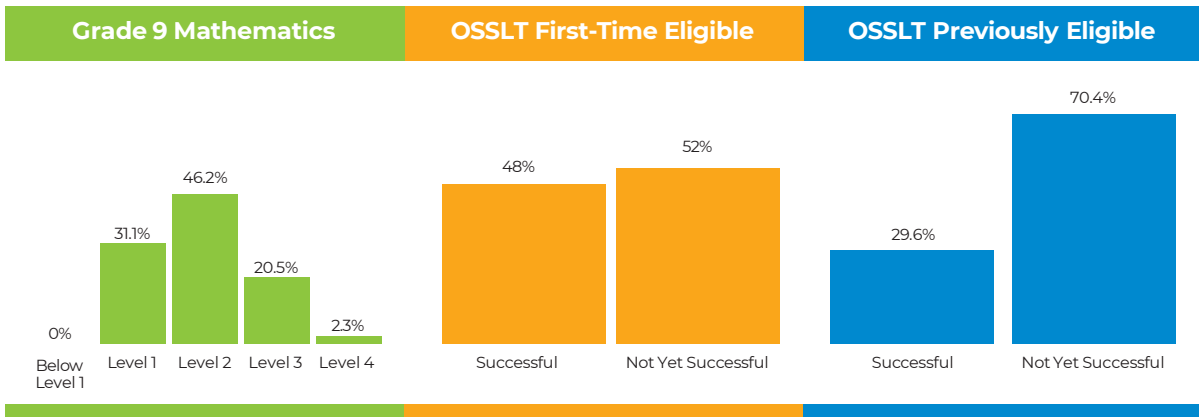


Department Data

EQAO Results for Students with Special Education Needs – Junior Assessment



EQAO Results for Students with Special Education Needs – Grade 9 Math, OSSLT First Time Eligible and Previously Eligible



Department Data

Funding

Grand Erie's annual budget includes funding for the special education programs and services outlined in the Special Education Plan.

Core Education Funding for special education is made up of four different allocations, which must be used exclusively for special education programs and services:

- Per Pupil Allocation
- Differentiated Needs Allocation
- Complex Supports Allocation
- Special Equipment Allocation

The prioritized funding for special education programs and services demonstrates Grand Erie's continued commitment to providing effective services to students for their Learning, Well-being, and Belonging. Special education funding is primarily directed towards staffing in order to develop and deliver programming. Staffing includes classroom-based support staff, school-based support staff and Specialized Services system staff.

In August 2024, Grand Erie provided a unique opportunity to Educational Assistants to attend schools a half-day before the first day of school in order to prepare for working with students. During this time, they were able to collaborate with school administrators, ensure that the equipment required for use with students was appropriate and review student plans. This investment promoted a smoother transition back to school for many students with special education needs.

Details of revenue and expenditures supporting special education programs and services are embedded annually in the budget planning process.

Staff Roles

Students may be supported by professionals in various roles across classroom, school and system teams. Supports include:

Classroom Support Staff

- General Education Class Teacher
- Special Education Class Teacher
- Designated Early Childhood Educator
- Educational Assistant

School Support Staff

- Learning Resource Teacher (LRT)
- Skill Building Resource Teacher
- Hub Resource Teacher

System Support Staff

Administrators

- Principal Leader for Specialized Services

Staff Roles

System Support Staff

Teachers

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Coaches
- Teacher Consultants (TC) Coaches
- Itinerant Intervention Planning Teacher (IIPT)
- Teacher Technician for Assistive Technology
- Teacher Technician for Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Virtual T.H.R.I.V.E. (Transferable, Higher order thinking, Research, Innovation and inquiry skills, Virtual Experience) Teacher
- Program and Inclusion Coordinator
- Intensive Support Inclusion Coordinator
- Vision Teacher

Educational Assistants

- Lead Educational Assistant for Special Equipment Allocation (SEA) Support
- Lead Educational Assistants

Professional Support Services

- Specialized Services Supervisor
- Psychological Services
- Speech Language Services
- Behaviour Analysts

Program Offerings

Grand Erie is committed to providing inclusive programs that foster positive learning experiences, full participation and successful student outcomes.

Special Education Class Placements and Program

Student placement in a general education classroom in the student's home school is the most enabling placement for all students. Individual student strengths and needs are considered annually when determining classroom placement. An inclusive model of special education identifies, prevents, and addresses barriers that may affect students' ability to learn and contribute to society. When more intensive support is required for a student, self-contained placement may be considered and confirmed by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) as outlined in Regulation 181/98.

Classroom placements and supports are provided on a continuum based upon the strengths and needs of the student, including:

- Regular classroom with UDL, CRRSP, differentiated instruction and assessment, and accommodations and/or modifications
- Self-contained special education class with partial integration
- Full-time self-contained special education class

Access to self-contained programming is discussed with parents/caregivers and students when it is being considered. Self-contained placements should be time-limited, always considering the student's transition and return to the general education classroom so that the student can engage in learning that will lead to graduation and post-secondary pathways.

Program Offerings

Pathways and Programs

Several self-contained classroom programs are offered at the elementary and secondary levels with a total of 51 classes.

Elementary Program Offerings

In elementary, self-contained programs are provided for students with autism, behaviour, and both intellectual and physical disabilities.

Intensive Support – Behaviour – 8 students

- Support students with the development of skills related to self-regulation
- Integrate students into a general education classroom when possible, working on accommodated and/or modified curriculum in addition to the alternative curriculum goals
- Focus on skill-building in this time-limited placement to exit to general education class programming

Intensive Support – Communication (Autism) – 6 students

- Alternative programming in these classrooms is driven by individual student need with staff facilitating independence and life skills where possible. Students have a diagnosis of Autism, which may impact their ability to participate in the credit-bearing programs
- Focused on communication and social skills with support for behaviour, safety, and sensory needs
- Time-limited with a focus on skill-building to exit to regular class programming wherever possible

Intensive Support Intellectual – 10 students

- Support students with an intellectual disability that typically falls within the moderate to severe range
- Focus is to develop fundamental independent living skills; functional academics, communication, self-advocacy, and social skills and assisted job skills that can lead to successful community participation and adult living
- Program goals are derived from alternative curriculum
- Focus on skill-building to exit to regular class programming wherever possible

Intensive Support – Physical – 6 students

- Alternative programming in these classrooms is driven by individual student need, with staff facilitating independence and life skills, where possible. Students have multiple exceptionalities
- Focus on communication, social awareness, personal care, and motor skills development
- Time-limited with a focus on skill-building to exit to regular class programming wherever possible

Secondary Program Offerings

In secondary school, self-contained programs are provided for students with autism, behaviour, and both intellectual and physical disabilities.

Intensive Support – Bridge: Autism, Behaviour, Intellectual Disability – 16 students

- Half-time program (4- section class)
- Supports student needs in literacy, numeracy, self-regulation, social skills, learning skills, self-advocacy, and mental health, while offering maximum integration with the opportunity to work towards credit
- Time-limited with a focus on skill-building to exit to credit-bearing classes
- Working towards an Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) or Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) with goals of attending post-secondary programming or entering the workplace after secondary school

Program Offerings

Secondary Program Offerings

Intensive Support – Communication: Autism – 6 students

- Full-time program (8-section class)
- Alternative programming in these classrooms is driven by individual student needs, with staff facilitating independence and life skills where possible. Students have a diagnosis of Autism, which may impact their ability to participate in credit-bearing programs
- Focus on communication and social skills with support for behaviour, safety, and sensory needs, applying the principals of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)
- Focus on skill-building to exit to credit-bearing classes wherever possible
- Working towards a Certificate of Accomplishment (COA), Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) or Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) with goals of taking further training, entering the workplace, or post-secondary programming after secondary school

Intensive Support – Intellectual Disability - 10 students

- Full-time program (8-section class)
- Support students with an intellectual disability that typically falls within the moderate to severe range
- Focus is to develop fundamental independent living skills; functional academics, communication, self-advocacy, and social skills and assisted job skills that can lead to successful community participation and adult living
- Program goals are derived from alternative curriculum
- Focus on skill-building to exit to credit-bearing classes wherever possible
- Working towards a Certificate of Accomplishment (COA), Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) or Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) with goals of taking further training, entering the workplace, or post-secondary programming after secondary school

Intensive Support – Physical – 6 students

- Full-time program (8-section class)
- Alternative programming in these classrooms is driven by individual student needs, with staff facilitating independence and life skills, where possible. Students have multiple exceptionalities
- Focus on communication, social awareness, personal care, and motor skills development
- Focus on skill-building to exit to credit-bearing classes wherever possible
- Working towards a Certificate of Accomplishment (COA), Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) or Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) with goals of taking further training, entering the workplace, or post-secondary programming after secondary school

Intensive Support – Vocational: Autism, Intellectual Disability – 16 students

- Full-time program (8-section class)
- Students are integrated into at least one credit-bearing course wherever possible, while also working on modified and/or alternative curriculum to gain skills in functional academics, job readiness and independent living skills
- Time-limited with a focus on skill-building to exit to credit-bearing classes wherever possible
- Working towards a Certificate of Accomplishment (COA), Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) or Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) with goals of taking further training, entering the workplace, or post-secondary programming after secondary school

Program Offerings

Additional Program Offerings

Further to regular class and special education class placements, Grand Erie offers the following special programs:

T.H.R.I.V.E. (Transferable, Higher order thinking, Research, Innovation and inquiry skills, Virtual Experience) Elementary

THRIVE is a virtual learning program for Grades 5 to -8 students that offers enhanced opportunities beyond their regular classroom, utilizing differentiated instructional strategies.

Students across Grand Erie can join the program while attending their home school using a school-provided device. The weekly schedule incorporates synchronous (live) and asynchronous (self-paced) sessions. Access to the program is granted for the current school year, with continued access reviewed annually. This program aims to complement and enhance the existing classroom programming and support.

The educational approach focuses on Deep Learning competencies, which include higher-order thinking skills and collaboration skills essential for 21st-century success. Through a project-based approach, the program develops skills by leveraging students' interests and strengths. It also encourages student advocacy and voice, promoting the transfer of skills learned in the virtual program to regular classroom settings.

Deeper Learning competencies are crucial as they enable students to transfer their learning to new and complex situations in an ever-changing global environment.

Skill Building Program Elementary

Eight elementary schools offer Skill Building programs staffed with an educator and educational assistant to provide opportunities for direct instruction to students on specific and targeted skills. Skill building educators work collaboratively with classroom educators to team-teach and/or co-plan lessons to ensure the learning is scaffolded to meet every learner at the start of the lesson. Instructional time with the skill building teacher focuses on targeted skill intervention and generalization through either in-class support or small group withdrawal for short durations. The overarching goal of the skill building program is to ensure that students are present, participating, supported, and achieving across all environments at school.

In the 2023-24 school year, Skill Building programs saw 13 students included from self-contained classroom settings. They supported 68 students from general education classrooms who may have previously been considered for self-contained programming.

Hub Program Secondary

The Hub Program has been introduced at three secondary schools.

In response to diverse learning needs of students, school administrators conceptualized an innovative program designed to offer targeted support, skill development, and credit-bearing opportunities for students with diverse learning needs within a regular classroom setting. The program focuses on fostering academic growth, enhancing vocational skills, and creating personalized pathways to success.

Like the Skill Building programs in elementary, secondary schools are building these responsive programs to meet the unique learning needs in their community.

Students have a regular class placement. Hub classes are not self-contained classes. Hub classes are credit-bearing, including General Learning Strategies, Hospitality and Math. Students in the Hub Program

Program Offerings

participate in direct instruction on specific and targeted skills in literacy, experiential learning and pre-employment skills, numeracy and mathematics.

Key components of the Hub Program include:

- GLE/GLS Learning Strategies credits
- Vocational Skills development
- Experiential Learning Opportunities
- Programming Driven by Student Voice and Choice
- Support with Credit Attainment
- Social-Emotional and Self-Regulation Support
- Focus on Student Pathways – Transitions
- Executive Functioning Development

Students access the Hub Program from all grades. Most students accessing the Hub have an IEP and are timetabled to the courses. Some additional students are not on the roster and use the service for drop-in support.

Schools report early successes with the Hub model, including:

- **Credit Attainment:** Some students who previously were in self-contained classrooms are now earning credits, with some achieving a full course load of 4 credits per semester.
- **Academic Success:** As one educator noted, “In my third period class, ALL the students are successful in all of their credit courses!”
- **Skill Development:** Students gain valuable skills beyond the curriculum, including community involvement, volunteering, self-awareness, and customer service skills.
- **Improved Student-Educator Relationships:** Educators report being able to build better relationships with students and provide more one-on-one attention.
- **Flexible Learning:** The program allows for a flexible pace tailored to individual student needs, leading to better success across their entire course load.
- **Vocational Preparation:** Students are learning pre-employment and vocational skills, preparing them for future career opportunities.
- **Personalized Support:** The program provides targeted instruction in areas such as literacy, numeracy, self-regulation and executive functioning
- **Increased Engagement:** The focus on student voice and choice in programming has led to increased student engagement and motivation.

Specialized Services is supporting Hub Programs to navigate new opportunities and challenges. Administrators, EAs, Classroom educators, Hub educators, and LRTs have participated in school-focused professional learning sessions led by their Specialized Services Teacher Consultant/Coach. Hub educators have been and will continue to be invited to attend all Learning Resource Teacher Learning Series sessions. The focus so far this year has included how to coach Universal Design and the Behaviour Skills Training model. Hub educators and administrators were invited to professional learning with Dr. Steven Shaw, focusing on “Academically-Enabling Skills and the Basic Constructs for Teaching Lower Achieving Students.” HUB educators can collaborate with elementary skill-building teachers and each other throughout the year.

Although it is early stages, educators are seeing the benefits of the Hub Program.

Program Offerings

"A gain I have made as an Educator in the HUB program is that I feel like I can build better relationships with my students and spend more one-on-one time with them."

"We are looking forward to increasing "our hands-on learning opportunities and employability skills... we have to help students."

"It's early in the life of this program, but we are excited by the possibilities and growth we are already seeing. We can't see where this all goes!"

Project SEARCH – A School-to-Work Training Program

Project SEARCH offers total workplace immersion (3 work placements, 700+ hours of hands-on experience) for students with Intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Community agencies linked with the program support the student's education, employment training and employment search after graduation.

The goal for students completing Project Search is competitive employment in an integrated setting in the community. Students learn transferable skills at a host work site that can support a variety of employment opportunities in their community. Students are immersed in an atmosphere of high expectations with the goal of securing quality employment within one year of graduation.

Each Project SEARCH program is supported by a Grand Erie Secondary School Teacher and a Skills Trainer from Community Living.

Project SEARCH Grand Erie currently partners with two host business sites, St. Joseph's Long Term Care Home in Brantford and Norfolk General Hospital in Simcoe, as well as Community Living Brant and Norfolk Association for Community Living (NACL).

Project Search Brantford graduated six students in the 2023-24 school year, and Project Search Norfolk celebrated 4 graduates, all of whom have gone on to competitive employment in their community.

For the 2025-26 school year, a third Project Search program will be implemented in Haldimand. The Project Search Haldimand expansion will include partnerships with the Haldimand War Memorial Hospital in Dunnville and Community Living Haldimand. As has been the model in Grand Erie, Community Living Haldimand will provide the Skills Trainer.

Professional Development

Leader Series

To support staff capacity to provide inclusive learning spaces and opportunities for students with special education needs, Grand Erie has embarked on a Leader Series for the 2024-25 school year to include the following professional learning opportunities:

School administrators participate in learning sessions focused on building their capacity to lead schools from an inclusive lens.

- History of Disability
- Understanding barriers and examining assumptions to include people with disabilities in school and society
- Responsive School Support Planning
- Leading with Inclusive Practices
- New software system (Clevr)

Professional Development

Leader Series

Learning Resource Teachers (LRTs) continue to participate in regular meetings and collaboration sessions. Each session focuses on new learning that helps LRTs work with school educators to build inclusive classrooms.

- History of Disability
- Understanding barriers and examining assumptions to include people with disabilities in school and society
- Behaviour and self-regulation supports
- Coaching UDL in the classroom
- Supporting students with special education needs in the EQAO assessment
- Alternative and Augmentative Communication and Executive Functioning supports
- New software system (Clevr)

Self-contained Teachers are being offered intensive learning to support students to develop their reading skills.

- Components of a literacy block
- Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT)
- UFLI
- Benchmark Assessments (BAS)
- Gathering Data and planning next steps

Educational Assistants

- History of Disability
- Understanding barriers and examining assumptions to include people with disabilities in school and society
- Behaviour and self-regulation supports
- Supporting UDL in the classroom, as a paraprofessional
- Supporting transitions
- Creating independence and the importance of peer relationships

Universal Design for Learning with Novak Education

Grand Erie staff have had the opportunity to participate in UDL professional learning throughout the 2023-24 school year and this continues in the 2024-25 school year. This learning is being facilitated by Novak Education and supports the implementation of UDL within the classroom by building a deeper understanding of this framework. Educators need diverse opportunities to create and/or develop UDL lesson plans, activities, resources or assessments. Sessions are tiered in depth and complexity, offering educators a variety of entry points to UDL learning.

Staff who have participated in Novak learning to date are:

- Skill Building Educator Teams
- Grades 2, 3 and 4 Educators
- Grades 5, 6 and 7 Educators
- Grade 8 and 9 Educators
- Secondary School Administrators
- Secondary School Teams (LRT, Student Success, Guidance)
- Learning Resource Teachers
- Educational Assistants
- System Departmental Staff

Initiatives

Educational Assistant Micro-Credential

An Educational Assistant micro-credential is being authored by Grand Erie Specialized Services staff. This credential will provide current and potential educational assistants employed by Grand Erie the opportunity to participate in current learning by supporting students with special education needs from an inclusive lens, collaborating with classroom educators, administrators, parents/caregivers and other educational assistants through asynchronous online modules. The course will open to the first group of students late spring or summer 2025.

IEP Review

During the 2024-25 school year, an IEP review will be conducted. The review will focus on current processes surrounding the creation, implementation and monitoring of IEPs with the goal of refining the process to ensure IEPs are responsive to student need. The work will be documented and shared in a Grand Erie publication to support staff members moving forward.

Clevr

The current special education document processing platform used in Grand Erie, eLITE, is being replaced by Clevr. A careful review of a variety of platforms supported Clevr as the optimal replacement for eLITE.

Clevr has been working with Grand Erie staff to build a platform of documents, forms, and processes unique to Grand Erie's needs. Through this work there has been the opportunity to deeply review current processes/practices. There is a focus on designing forms to meet the expectations in legislation and the Special Education in Ontario K-12 Guide that is asset-based and easy to use. Focus groups have been conducted with LRTs for input and pilots are being conducted to ensure smooth workflow and useability with sample applications on IEPs and Behaviour and Safety Plans. Further applications such as Supervised Alternative Learning (SAL), Co-operative Learning, Transportation Plans, Medical and Personal Care Plans, Referrals for Assessments and Interventions, Case Notes, Learner Portraits (Student Profiles) and IPRC paperwork are all in various stages of completion.

School-based pilots will begin in January, and the system transition to the Clevr platform will be completed by early spring 2025.

Resources

[Grand Erie's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#)

[Grand Erie's Special Education Plan](#)



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