



# Specialized Services



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## About Grand Erie

Grand Erie serves a diverse region of urban, rural and Indigenous communities and is committed to creating inclusive and innovative learning environments where all students can thrive. Strong leadership is essential to this commitment and supports our focus on student well-being, achievement, and equity.

## Grand Erie's Strategic Plan Collective Priorities:

We build a culture of learning to nurture curiosity and opportunity for each learner.

We build a culture of well-being to support the cognitive, social, emotional and physical needs of each learner.

We build a culture of belonging to support an equitable, inclusive and responsive environment for each learner.

## Department Goal

To increase the knowledge and skills of staff to better support learners with special education needs in an inclusive classroom.

### Our Guiding Principles

We believe in the potential of every student. Our approach is grounded in the following principles:

1. Inclusive First
  - The first and preferred option for every student is placement in a regular classroom in their community school.
  - Supports and services are designed to promote inclusion and full participation.
  - Accommodations are provided when barriers remain.
2. Equity and Accessibility
  - We embed the principles of equity, equality, and human rights into all learning opportunities.

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- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) ensures curriculum, instruction, and assessment are accessible to all.
- 3. Respect for Individual Strengths
  - Every student is unique. Success looks different for each learner.
  - Placement decisions consider multiple factors and are never based on stereotypes or bias.
  - Diversity in ability is valued and enriches the learning environment.
- 4. High Expectations and Responsive Teaching
  - We hold high expectations for all learners.
  - Educators use responsive teaching strategies and differentiated assessment to support growth.
- 5. Collaborative Support
  - The classroom teacher is the primary support for all students.
  - Additional staff collaborate through coaching, co-planning, and co-teaching to meet student needs.
- 6. Empowering Independence
  - Resources and supports are provided to help students become as independent as possible in achieving their goals.
- 7. Data-Informed Decisions
  - We use data intentionally to understand student strengths and needs.
  - This helps us remove barriers and provide precise, effective interventions.

## 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 classroom placements

### Education Quality and Accountability Office

Specialized Services collaborates with Curriculum and Student Achievement to assist school staff in supporting 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 work collaboratively with math coaches and are 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 includes 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:

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- Individualized accommodations: Aligning the accommodations the student requires as indicated in the IEP with the directions in the EQAO Administration Guide
- Assistive technology: Offering access to, and developing skills in, the use 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.

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

### Staff

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

#### School-Based Staff

##### Classroom Support Staff

- General Education Teacher
- Self-Contained Program Teacher
- Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE)
- School-Based Educational Assistant

##### School Support Staff

- Learning Resource Teacher (LRT)
- Skill Building Resource Teacher – Elementary
- Hub Resource Teacher – Secondary

### System Support Staff

#### System Administrators

- System Leader for Specialized Services
- Specialized Services Supervisor

#### System Educators

- Teacher Consultants (TC)
- Itinerant Intervention Planning Teacher (IIPT)
- Itinerant Teacher for Assistive Technology.
- Itinerant Teacher for Deaf/Hard of Hearing.
- Itinerant Vision Teacher
- Virtual T.H.R.I.V.E Teacher
- Program and Inclusion Coordinator
- Intensive Support Inclusion Coordinator

#### System Educational Assistants

- Lead Educational Assistant – School Support.
- Lead Educational Assistant for Special Education Allocation (SEA)

#### System Transition Support

- Specialized Services Transition Navigator

#### Professional Support Services Personnel

- Attendance Counsellors
- Behaviour Analysts
- Behaviour Counsellors
- Communicative Disorders Assistants (CDA)
- Psychoeducational Consultants
- Speech Language Pathologists (SLP)

## Program Offerings

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

### Self-Contained Program Placements

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 program with partial integration
- Full-time self-contained program

Access to self-contained programming is discussed with parents/caregivers and students when it is being considered. Placement in self-contained programs 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.

### Pathways and Programs

Several self-contained classroom programs are offered at the elementary and secondary levels.

#### Elementary Program Offerings

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

##### Intensive Support – Communication (Autism) – 6 students

- Students have a diagnosis of Autism, which may impact their ability to participate in credit-bearing programs
- Alternative programming is driven by individual student need with staff facilitating independence and life skills where possible, focused on communication and social skills with support for behaviour, safety, and sensory needs
- 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

- Students have multiple exceptionalities, with predominant physical needs.
- Alternative programming is driven by individual student need with staff facilitating independence and life skills, where possible.
- 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 credits
- 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

### **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) with goals of taking further training, entering the workplace, and independent or supported living 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), with goals of taking further training, entering the workplace, and independent or supported living 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), with goals of taking further training, entering the workplace, and independent or supported living 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

## 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 future 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.

### Skill Building Program Elementary

Eight elementary schools offer Skill Building programs staffed with an educator 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 educator 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.

### Hub Program Secondary

The Hub Program, offered at three secondary schools, is 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.

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.

Students in the Hub Program 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 personalized student support focused on:

- 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
- Flexible Learning

### 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 partners with three host business sites, St. Joseph's Long Term Care Home in Brantford, Norfolk General Hospital in Simcoe and the Haldimand War Memorial Hospital in Dunnville. Community Living partners include Community Living Brant, Norfolk Association for Community Living (NACL) and Community Living Haldimand.

## Resources

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

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



## Grand Erie District School Board

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