



Niagara Catholic District School Board

## ***SENSORY ROOM AND MOVEMENT ROOM***

### ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

300 – Schools/Students

No 303.6

Adopted Date: March 27, 2025

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In keeping with the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, the following are the Administrative Operational Procedures for Sensory and Movement Rooms.

### **PREAMBLE**

Niagara Catholic is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students and staff. Some students may experience high levels of dysregulation during the school day. The creation and use of a Sensory/Movement Room is proactive and supports student learning through self-regulation and calming strategies, promoting health and well-being, and preventing and de-escalating challenging behaviours.

Schools with a Sensory/Movement Room must keep students engaged in regular education settings, such as classrooms, for most of each school day.

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Assent:** A student's affirmative agreement to participate. Students can show assent and assent withdrawal verbally and non-verbally. Some signs of assent include, but are not limited to, saying yes, smiling, use of visuals, actively engaging in an activity and interacting with an adult. Signs of assent withdrawal include saying "no", showing refusal to participate, and avoiding or demonstrating a negative attitude towards interacting with the adult or being in a location.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP):** An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is established for every student identified as exceptional and any other student requiring an IEP as determined by the school-based team. An Individual Education Plan is a written plan that outlines programming for a student with special education needs. In consultation with parents/guardians, an IEP defines a student's strengths and needs, identifying accommodations and/or modified expectations from the Ontario Curriculum or alternative expectations that make up a student's program.

**Sensory Room:** A Sensory Room is an intentionally created and designed space that provides multi-sensory resources to support the sensory needs of a student to engage them in learning as reflected in the goals identified in their Individual Education Plan. It is a controlled, sensory-focused space that aims to support social and emotional learning and provide students with the individualized sensory input they need to self-regulate, so they can be better prepared for learning and interacting with others.

**Movement Room:** A Movement Room is an intentionally created and designed space where a student can develop their gross motor skills and explore ways that their bodies can move. These engaging spaces build strength and confidence, promote body awareness, and inspire independent, active play.

## CREATION AND DESIGN OF A SENSORY/MOVEMENT ROOM

The creation and design of a Sensory/Movement Room must be supported by the school Principal, the Area Student Support Facilitator, and approved by the Superintendent of Education of Student Support.

A Sensory/Movement Room should be continuously evaluated by the school Principal and the Area Student Support Facilitator to confirm:

- that it is still required,
  - that it is being used in a purposeful and productive manner, and that,
  - it supports student sensory and movement needs, to assist students in achieving their learning goals and positive outcomes.
- An Occupational Therapist and/or Physiotherapist must be consulted in the creation and design of a Sensory/Movement Room.
  - Facilities Services will ensure that a Sensory/Movement Room meets building codes and fire safety regulations.
  - A Sensory/Movement Room must have a window for clear visibility from the outside, if this is not possible the door must remain open for the safety of the student and staff.
  - Despite visibility, at no time should a student be left unattended in a Sensory/Movement Room.
  - A Sensory/Movement Room must be included in the school fire safety plan and reviewed/revised annually.
  - A Sensory/Movement Room must be part of the Joint Health and Safety Committee monthly inspection and reporting.

## USE OF SENSORY /MOVEMENT ROOM

Every student accessing a Sensory/Movement Room must have learning goals and success criteria linked to the use of the room as part of their Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP should clearly state when and for what purpose the Sensory/Movement Room will be used by the student.

- Parents/Guardians must be informed of their child's program in a Sensory/Movement Room. If requested, the parents/guardians should be given the opportunity to view the Sensory/Movement Room.
- School staff will collect baseline data to determine the need of a Sensory/Movement Room as well as the creation of an individual program and schedule for the Sensory/Movement Room for the identified student.
- School staff will use the attached Tracking Sheet ([Appendix A](#)) to maintain and evaluate the student's success in a Sensory/Movement Room.
- Students must access a Sensory/Movement Room voluntarily, through demonstrated assent, and be supervised at all times by designated staff.
- Students will engage in purposeful and productive sensory/movement learning activities provided by staff while using a Sensory/Movement Room. If the student's sensory/movement needs can be met in their classroom, use of an alternative space should be avoided.
- Transition planning should include the identification of sensory/movement activities that can be implemented in the regular classroom without disruption to others.
- In certain instances, an Occupational Therapist and/or Physiotherapist may be involved in the implementation and evaluation of student specific supports in a Sensory/Movement Room.

- Where student specific purpose equipment is prescribed by an Occupational Therapist and/or Physiotherapist to be utilized by a student in a Sensory/Movement Room it should not be shared with other students.
- The recommended usage time for a Sensory/Movement Room is 15 minutes per visit unless otherwise recommended by an Occupational Therapist and/or Physiotherapist.
- To ensure equal access, confirm supervision, and inform program planning, an individual student's use of a Sensory/Movement Room shall be scheduled and recorded ([Appendix A](#)).
- The use of a Sensory/Movement Room is not a long-term strategy and should be regularly evaluated by the classroom teacher and support staff to assess the effectiveness of the student's progress towards goal achievement as documented in the student's IEP.
- A student must always be supervised by an educator in the Sensory/Movement Room.
- Items in the Sensory/Movement Room must not obstruct walkways and/or emergency exits.
- Materials used in the Sensory/Movement Room must be fire-retardant and/or compliant with fire codes.

## EQUIPMENT AND CLEANING

A Sensory/Movement Room should be maintained as a clean and hygienic environment for students and staff. All equipment in a Sensory/Movement Room should be inspected daily by staff to ensure that the equipment is clean, in good working order and safe to use. Equipment in need of repair should be immediately brought to the attention of the school principal. Appropriate repairs, disposals and/or replacement of equipment should be in consultation with the Area Student Support Facilitator.

- Custodial staff will be responsible for cleaning a Sensory/Movement Room as part of their regular daily schedule, and for any spills, accidents, and/or bodily fluid incidents that may occur throughout the day, following standard cleaning protocols.
- Custodial staff will supply each Sensory/Movement Room with a labeled spray bottle of disinfectant and cleaning cloths provided by Facilities Services.
- Staff supporting a student in a Sensory/Movement Room prior to departure should perform light disinfection of touch points, contact surfaces and equipment using the disinfectant and cleaning cloths provided.
- All staff are to review the Safety Data Sheet prior to using the disinfectant agent for health and safety purposes.

Any further instruction on the cleaning and disinfectant procedures for the use of a Sensory/Movement Room will be the responsibility of each individual school site.

### **Resources:**

- [\*National Council for Special Education: Sensory Spaces in Schools 2021\*](#)
- [\*National Council for Special Education: Let's Get Regulated Information for Parents\*](#)
- [\*National Autism Resource: School Sensory Rooms\*](#)
- [\*https://smho-smsso.ca/online-resources/sensory-strategies-to-support-the-mental-health-of-students-with-special-education-needs/\*](https://smho-smsso.ca/online-resources/sensory-strategies-to-support-the-mental-health-of-students-with-special-education-needs/)
- [\*Niagara Catholic District School Board Policies/Procedures\*](#)
  - [\*Access to Board Premises \(302.6.3\) Administrative Operational Procedures\*](#)
  - [\*Accessibility Standards Policy \(800.8\)\*](#)
  - [\*Code of Conduct Policy \(302.6.2\)\*](#)
  - [\*Equity and Inclusive Education Policy \(100.10\)\*](#)
  - [\*Privacy Policy \(600.6\)\*](#)

- [Safe and Accepting Schools Policy \(302.6\)](#)
- [Building Bridges to Student Support: Niagara Catholic Special Education Plan](#)

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