

Psych-ed assessment wait list 15 months, board says

By Dominik Kurek
METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

Parents of students at local public schools can expect to wait up to two years for a psycho-educational assessment for their child, according to a report presented to Halton District School Board trustees.

The staff report was presented by David Boag, superintendent of education, at a recent board meeting.

His report stated the average wait time to assess students, who are struggling in their classrooms, is 15 months, but some students can wait as long as two years depending on the priority level. An assessment recommendation can help identify learning strategies for students, such as entry into special education classes.

This information came to the trustees after the previous board passed a motion in November to begin the gifted student program in Grades 1 and 2. Prior to that, the earliest age group of students entering the gifted program was in Grade 4.

"This year is particularly problematic for the primary gifted screening. As we do phase-one of that process, we're actually doing two grades at once this year, Senior Kindergarten and Grade 1. So we have two grades in the phase and next year we will have one grade so those numbers will be

reduced by half," Boag told trustees.

Board staff began working to assess 360 primary students for the gifted program this year, plus it's assessing another 140 Grade 3s for the Grade 4 gifted program and another 45 to 50 primary language class assessments.

However, another roughly 700 students who are struggling in their classrooms are left on the waiting list. At the current rate, Boag said he expects about 250 of those students to be assessed by the end of June.

The gifted program screening process is taking place through February and March, and Boag said these assessments are time sensitive because the students have to be identified for the start of class in September.

"We're in a bit of a pinch right now but hopefully a few years down the line we'll be in a bit better shape," he said.

He added that in a few years, the need to assess students for the Grade 4 gifted program will be eliminated.

Oakville Trustee and board Vice-Chair Kelly Amos gave a notice of motion, which will return to the trustees for a vote at the next meeting. The motion will ask for a report on what possible actions can be taken to reduce the wait list and the costs associated with the actions, as well as how to avoid such a long wait list from happening again.

If passed, the report would be presented to the board and to its Special Education Advisory Committee for input.



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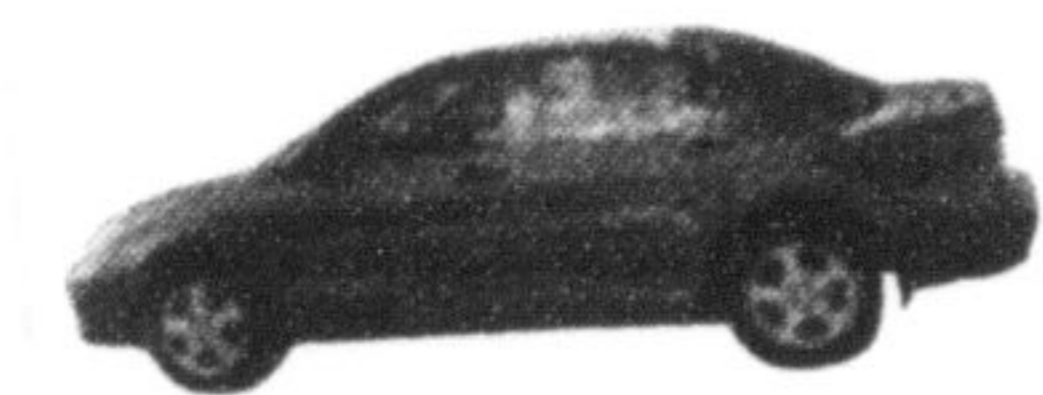
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