

Multi-Modal Rooms for Students

Adopted under the Education Act and in alignment with Mitigating Risk of Injury Behaviours Procedure.

1.0 Objective

Multi-Modal Rooms are physical spaces designated as alternative learning spaces within schools, which are made available to students as a proactive means to promote self-regulation. They may be termed “Multi-Modal Rooms,” “Sensory Rooms” or “Gross-Motor Rooms” or have *some other moniker*. Although the targeted intervention strategies may differ, the objective of each of these rooms remains the same: to assist students requiring individualized access to sensory and self-regulatory spaces in order to feel safe. These rooms are to be used as a preventative or *early intervention* strategy and should be incorporated into a safety or self-regulation plan for students who present with needs in these areas. Use of such rooms should be scheduled throughout the school day as part of *as part of proactive student support planning, to provide a sensory calmed or enriched environment (depending on the student’s needs in that moment)*, rather than as a reactive response to escalated, unsafe behaviour or as a discipline response through classroom exclusion. These spaces are never to be used as a consequence for distressed behaviour.

Use of Multi-Modal Rooms should be time-limited and monitored for assessment of their benefit in supporting students.

1.1 Purpose

To provide all staff with guidelines and information for use of Multi-Modal Rooms. A Multi-Modal Room is used when a student presents with a need to access a sensorily different environment, or when risk of injury may be mitigated by providing such an alternative space and the use of this room would serve those needs. Multi-Modal Rooms:

- meet and respond to the sensory and environmental needs of students who require an alternative space to self-regulate;
- meet the needs of safety and well-being of students and the staff who support them.

Human rights and accommodation

Durham District School Board (DDSB) is committed to providing services, employment and learning and working environments that centre Indigenous rights, human rights and equity and are welcoming, respectful, safe, inclusive, equitable, accessible and free from all forms discrimination, harassment, racism, oppression and harm. This procedure must be carried out in a manner that is consistent with this commitment and the DDSB’s legal duty to accommodate and to proactively identify, prevent and address potential discrimination and harassment under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

This means:

- considering a student's Human Rights Code related needs on an individual basis and providing accommodation when required to the point of undue hardship.
- taking into account systemic and individual factors and considering the unique needs of Indigenous and racialized peoples, people with disabilities and other Human Rights Code protected groups when making decisions that affect them.
- no student is treated differently because of biases, assumptions or stereotypes associated with a Human Rights Code-related characteristic(s) or combination of characteristics (e.g., ancestry, race, disability, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, etc.)

This applies to all aspects of Multi-Modal Room procedures, including developing student safety plans, supporting a student's transition to or from a Multi-Modal Room, setting up the environment, providing learning opportunities and the student debriefing process.

2.0 Definitions

2.1.1 Multi-modal Room:

An alternate space outside of the classroom where student can engage in self-regulation and/or sensory activities that promote their wellness and a return to their learning environment(s).

Note: These rooms were renamed from Calming Rooms to Multi-Modal Rooms through procedure revision Fall 2024.

2.1.2 Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) is defined as:

A program designed by educators (OESC - Ontario Educational Services Corporation) for educators that incorporates the latest information on child development and preventative strategies to mitigate risks, as well as information on current, relevant education procedures and up-to-date legislative guidelines that have direct bearing on how schools interact with students. The in-service for BMS is presented regularly and is available through MyPD.

2.1.3 Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA) is defined as:

An evidence-based approach to understanding the contextual factors that make risk of injury behaviour more or less likely to occur over time.

2.1.4 Behaviour Skills Training (BST) is defined as:

A procedure that is used to teach new skills and/or responses consisting of:

- the use of instructions,
- modeling,
- rehearsal,
- and feedback

2.1.5 Safe (Containment) Room:

A completely empty room into which a student is forcibly placed and confined by employees for a period of time to ensure the safety of the student and others. The student is placed in the room and is not free to leave the room without permission. Although the room is empty, it may be padded to assist with the prevention of self-injurious behaviour.

DDSB does not support the use of Safe (Containment) Rooms.

2.1.6 Student Support Plan is defined as:

A systematic and individualized support plan derived from a functional behaviour assessment, which is designed to address student needs and increase the likelihood of self-regulation

2.1.7 **Student Safety Plan** is defined as:

A comprehensive and individualized plan developed to meet and respond to the safety needs of students who present with risk of injury behaviours, which outlines specialized prevention, intervention, and crisis response procedures.

2.1.8 **Student Debriefing** is defined as:

An opportunity for students who have used the Multi-Modal Room as a means to self-regulate following an upset to communicate with a familiar and supportive staff with the purpose of:

- reflecting on what cause the distress or dysregulation (antecedent), and offering them support if needed to identify the situation
 - reflecting on the student's response to this event, without an offering an evaluative opinion;
 - and shifting the focus to 'problem solving for next time'.
- **NOTE:** For some students, accommodations may be needed to facilitate the debrief, such as the offer of alternative or augmentative communication, the use of visual supports, e.g., scales, contingency maps, social narratives, social behaviour mapping, or access to items that help the student maintain self-regulation.

2.1.9 **Accommodation**

Means adjusting services, programs and practices to remove barriers and better respond to or address individual Human Rights Code related needs. The DDSB has a legal duty to accommodate students' Human Rights Code related needs. This means providing accommodation that:

- most respects the student's dignity and individual needs
- maximizes the student's integration, participation, and independence.

Wherever possible, DDSB will try to anticipate barriers faced by individuals with Human Rights Code related needs and proactively address those needs.

The accommodation process is a shared responsibility and the DDSB will cooperatively engage with the student/parent/caregiver to consider accommodation options and solutions. The DDSB must make every effort to accommodate Human Rights Code related needs, to the point of undue hardship.

2.1.10 **Undue hardship**

Is the legal test of how far the DDSB must go to accommodate. The only factors that can be considered are costs, outside source of funding, and health and safety requirements (where health and safety risks cannot be mitigated or reduced). Undue hardship is a very high legal standard that requires real, direct, and objective evidence.

Where it's not possible to implement the most appropriate accommodation immediately or when further consultation is required, interim or next best solutions must be considered.

The authority to decide that an accommodation cannot be provided because of undue hardship rests with the principal. The principal will contact their superintendent, who will consult with the DDSB's General Legal Counsel, Human Rights and Equity Advisor and other areas (e.g., Inclusive Student Services, Equity, Indigenous Education, Human Resources Services, etc.) as needed to make this decision.

3.0 Procedure

3.1 Background

All students possess unique sensory and self-regulatory strengths and needs. For some students, these are impacted by contextual factors such as the sensory environment, their physical and/or emotional well-being, and their support needs in that moment. Multi-Modal Rooms offer students who benefit from scheduled access to an alternative space and/or are beginning to experience an escalated state of arousal the opportunity to practice proactive self-regulation. They provide a private and safe place where a student can self-regulate without needing to mask while accessing, staff supervision and support if needed. It is imperative that multi-modal rooms should not be used to react to escalated, unsafe behaviour, or for discipline and/or exclusion.

3.2 Classroom and Environmental Prerequisites

Please see Fidelity Checklist, Appendix A.

- 3.2.1 For the Multi-Modal Room to be an effective accommodation, there are several prerequisites that must be in place in the student's environment. The environment in the classroom must be structured to be inclusive and conducive to meeting the student's needs, as appropriate to their skill levels. Individualized strategies for enhancing self-regulation should already be available within the learning environment. Self-regulation strategies should be emphasized to promote the learning skills of all students, but particularly those students who benefit from the accommodation of a Multi-Modal Room.
- 3.2.2 If a student presents as benefitting from accommodations that promote self-regulation, regardless of their diagnostic profile (if any), then evidence-based strategies must be implemented in the classroom. Students who require a Multi-Modal Room should have an assessment of their needs (such as a Functional Behaviour Assessment) and a Student Support Plan developed. Using the information gained from the needs assessment, the prevention and early intervention strategies identified in the Student Support Plan should also be outlined in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), where one exists. Examples of strategies include (though are not limited to): access to devices such as noise-cancelling headphones that mitigate against sensory overwhelm, visual schedules; work systems; scheduled breaks; uncluttered classroom environment; use of learning and self-regulatory materials that motivate the student, and structured activities. Some students could benefit from use of specific down-regulation equipment or other items in the space (e.g, ones that have cultural/spiritual significance, such as for students who are Indigenous who may benefit from having ceremonial or identity-affirming objects). As well, some students who are showing signs of distress may benefit from the use of an Escalation Continuum or specific calming plan (see Appendix A for samples), which operationalizes the observable behaviours into Levels which correspond to specific intervention strategies, including the potential use of a Multi-Modal Room.
- 3.2.3 *Behaviour Skills Training* involves teaching students how to self-monitor their sensory, emotional, and behavioural arousal so that they become aware of when they may need to use the Multi-Modal Room (i.e., when they are feeling early signs of frustration or anxiety that could lead to distress). The goal of such teaching would be to increase the student's independence in using the Multi-Modal Room. Depending on the learning needs of the student, planning should include specifically teaching students to identify their triggers and physical responses to these triggers. Direct teaching, modelling, and positive reinforcement of self-regulation skills should occur and be practiced, including the timely use of the Multi-Modal Room, if the student is amenable to using it.

3.3 Multi-Modal Room Environment

- 3.3.1 When it is decided that a student requires the use of a Multi-Modal Room, the school Principal will contact the System Lead for Inclusive Student Services and Facilities Services to make arrangements for the refitting of a room, if one is not already available. A room may not be used for this purpose, even on a temporary basis, without the approval of both the Inclusive Student Services System Lead and Facilities Services for the safety of both students and staff.

If possible, the physical location of a Multi-Modal Room should be on the same floor as the student's classroom to provide ease of access for students and staff. The Multi-Modal Room can be painted in a neutral colour, with minimal visual distractions. Ideally, the location of a Multi-Modal Room should be where sounds may be diffused (e.g., the sound in the room does not affect nearby classrooms and vice versa). There should be no intercom system within the room to avoid unpredictable auditory input; staff should have two-way radios to communicate.

The door to the Multi-Modal Room should be equipped with a window, made of an unbreakable material, with a complete view of the entire room. If full visibility of the room cannot be achieved, a shatterproof mirror will be provided to ensure complete visibility of the student. The room will have good ventilation. Electrical receptacles should be tamper-proof and located high on the wall for safety. Low receptacles may be provided if required for specific equipment and student needs and may be equipped with safety covers if required. Depending on the needs of the student(s), light switches for the room may be located outside of the room or be operated by a key switch.

- 3.3.2 Activities to promote self-regulation for the student should be available in the Multi-Modal Room for use, or should be accessible for students to bring in with them. These activities need to be individualized and developed in consultation with the Inclusive Student Services Team, Occupational Therapist, and/or specialized teams (ART, START).

3.4 Use of the Multi-Modal Room

- 3.4.1 Although Multi-Modal Rooms can be accessed by any student in a school, they are purpose-designed for students who benefit from an alternative space to self-regulate and practice strategies to promote return to the classroom environment. The Multi-Modal Room should be used as a prevention and early intervention strategy and not as a crisis response strategy, and never as a discipline response or exclusion. First, as part of planning for a response to student needs for self-regulatory strategies, staff should be current in their BMS certification. Second, staff should be clear about when to use a Multi-Modal Room as part of a prevention or early intervention strategy. Use of an Escalation Continuum (Appendix B) is recommended to ensure a clear delineation of observable behaviours that can be identified by staff and/or the student to indicate a need for the Multi-Modal Room as well as when a transition away from the room is appropriate.

Direct teaching and practice of calming and de-escalation skills should be part of the student's IEP and/or student safety plan and directly taught for use in different environments, including the Multi-Modal Room. These skills should also be taught by any staff supporting the student (if appropriate). The engagement in activities in the Multi-Modal Room should be an extension of the IEP and/or student safety plan.

- 3.4.2 **There must be direct adult supervision at all times for students who are using the Multi-Modal Room.** Direct supervision must be maintained by staff, either inside or outside the Multi-Modal Room. The door of the Multi-Modal Room can either be closed or opened but ***must never be locked or held shut.***
- 3.4.3 **Under no circumstances should a student be physically moved by staff to a Multi-Modal Room.** If a student is in crisis and, thus, is unable to move independently to the Multi-Modal Room, staff should evacuate the other students in the environment and give the student space. This is consistent with BMS Training Guidelines. Staff should limit verbal interactions/instructions and allow the student to self-regulate in this space first, before considering a move to the Multi-Modal Room.
- 3.4.4 Staff are required to document the use of the Multi-Modal Room for each student, using the Multi-Modal Room Data Chart (see Appendix C). The Multi-Modal Room Data Chart collects the following information: date, staff name, duration of time spent in the Multi-Modal Room, scheduled versus unscheduled visits, what accommodations were required for the student (e.g., spiritual items), and ABC data (when visits are unscheduled). Documentation needs to be held in a confidential place and monitored and reviewed regularly for programming purposes, with the latter being shared with parents/guardians of the student using the Multi-Modal Room.
- 3.4.5 The use of the Multi-Modal Room is most successful when a student, if capable, has been explicitly taught to recognize the need for its use. Consultation with support staff is recommended to assess and determine the individual skills that need to be taught for the student to access the Multi-Modal Room.
- 3.4.6 The length of time spent in the Multi-Modal Room should be operationalized (e.g., when both staff and student jointly identify that the student is presenting as regulated). Use of the Escalation Continuum (Appendix B) is recommended to ensure a clear delineation of observable behaviours that can be identified by staff and/or student to indicate a level of regulated behaviour. Again, staff should be properly supervising the student to determine the level of behaviour the student is demonstrating. If a student is not at a point of observable regulation (i.e., Level 1 on the Escalation Continuum), then the student may benefit from the offer of more time in the Multi-Modal Room.
- 3.4.7 For students who have accessed the Multi-Modal Room for unscheduled use, opportunity for a debrief should be given, to allow the student a chance to communicate their experience and engage with a caring educator in problem solving (refer to Section 2.0).

4.0 Reference Documents

4.1 Policies

Indigenous Education Policy

Human Rights Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy

Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention Policy

4.2 Procedures

Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure

Mitigating Risk of Injury Procedure Safety Supports Procedure

4.3 Other Documents

Ontario Human Rights Code

Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities

Appendix:

None or

Appendix A: Multi-Modal Room Fidelity Checklist

Appendix B: Sample Behaviour Escalation Continuum

Sample 3-Point Scale Behaviour Escalation Continuum Template

5-Point Scale Behaviour Escalation Continuum Template

Appendix C: Multi-Modal Room Log

Effective Date

2024-10-09

Amended

2024-10-09

Appendix A

Multi-Modal Room Fidelity Checklist

Multi-Modal Rooms are used as a prevention strategy or an early intervention strategy and should be embedded within a Behaviour skills Training program to teach students skills of affective recognition and self-regulation.

Multi-Modal Rooms: Start Up and Set Up

- Contact ISS System Lead
- Contact Facilities Services
- Determine Location in School; ideally:
 - On the same floor as the Front Office.
 - In an accessible location (i.e., doesn't require students or staff to use stairs to access)
 - Located when sounds are diffused.
- Work with Facilities to ensure:
 - The colour of the room is neutral
 - There is no intercom system (though a communication system is in place).
 - There is visual access (e.g., window).
 - Windows are made of unbreakable material.
 - There is full visibility of room via structural layout or use of shatterproof mirror.
 - Good ventilation exists.
 - Light switches are located outside the room.

Multi-Modal Rooms: Do's

- The Multi-Modal Room is embedded within a prevention and early intervention strategy as noted on IEP and/or Student Safety Plan.
- Promotion of self-regulation skills is already in place in the student's classroom.
- Use of the Multi-Modal Room is taught, modelled and rehearsed before actual use.
- Use of the Multi-Modal Room is offered as a response to a student's distress or dysregulation , e.g., Yellow Zone of Escalation Continuum (Appendix B).
- Use is associated with a Data Collection process (Appendix C).
- Triggers that may prompt access to the Multi-Modal Room are documented, and a plan is in place to mitigate those triggers, where possible.
- Time spent accessing the room is documented by educators.
- Time spent accessing the room is supervised by an adult.
- Time spent accessing the room is limited, and subject to the use of skills being reinforced to assist in self-regulation.
- Use of the room typically is scheduled, as per IEP or Student Safety Plan or, if unscheduled, is followed by a student debrief.

Multi-Modal Rooms: Don'ts

- Use of the room is not a crisis response plan, as a means to discipline or exclude a student
- The room is not a destination of escort for students who are already significantly distressed and presenting with risk of injury behaviour directed toward self or others.
- The room is not an exclusionary site, with a closed or locked door or a door that is being held shut.

Appendix B

Sample Behaviour Escalation Continuum

Please fill out what you notice about (student name)’s behaviour looks like in all levels. Blue represents tired/sad/low energy and red is the highest intensity of distressed behaviour. Please fill out what staff are expected to do at each level. Note that this does not replace the Student Safety Plan.

LEVEL	What do you notice is happening?	What Do Staff Do?

Please note that this does not replace the Student Safety Plan.

Sample 3-Point Scale Behaviour Escalation Continuum Template

Please fill out what you notice about (student name)’s behaviour at each of the 3 levels, level 1 being regulated and Level 3 being the highest intensity of distressed behaviour. Please fill out what staff are expected to do at each level. Please note that this does not replace the Student Safety Plan.

LEVEL	What Does the Student’s Behaviour Look Like?	What Does Staff Do?
3		
2		
1		

Appendix B

5-Point Scale Behaviour Escalation Continuum Template

Please fill out what you notice about (student name)’s behaviour at each of the 5 levels, with Level 1 being regulated and Level 5 being the highest intensity of distressed behaviour. Please fill out what staff are expected to do at each level. Please note that this does not replace the Student Safety Plan.

LEVEL	What Does the Student’s Behaviour Look Like?	What Does Staff Do?
5		
4		
3		
2		
1		

Appendix C

Multi-Modal Room Log

Instructions: The Multi-Modal Room Log should be completed by staff any time a student accesses a Multi-Modal Room for the purposes of self-regulation. Please use a separate Multi-Modal Room Log per student. Staff are advised to review the Durham District School Board Multi-Modal Room Protocol to ensure appropriate use of Multi-Modal Rooms. Multi-Modal Rooms Logs should be used in conjunction with an individualized ‘escalation continuum’ for a student.

Student Initials: _____

Date	Time Entered	Time Exited	Scheduled or Unscheduled	Behaviours Upon Entry	Behaviour Upon Exit	Staff initials
			S U	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 (Level 4) (Level 5)	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 (Level 4) (Level 5)	