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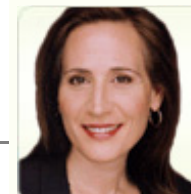
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RECENSEMENT**Policy/Program Memorandum No. 8****Issued under the authority of the Deputy Minister of Education****Date of Issue:** Revised 1982**Effective:** Until
revoked or modified**Subject:** **LEARNING DISABILITIES****Application:** Directors of education
Principals of schools**References:** Memorandum 1978-79:14 (Curriculum: The
education of students with learning
disabilities)

The Education Act requires school boards to provide appropriate special education programs and services for all their exceptional students by 1985, either directly, or by purchasing the from other school boards.

The Act also requires school boards to implement procedures for early and ongoing identification of the learning abilities an needs of pupils, and to prescribe standards in accordance with wh these procedures are implemented. Identification and appropriate

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intervention at this early stage will ensure that learning-disabled students are provided with meaningful early school experiences related to their individual strengths and needs.

1. DEFINITION OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

The Ministry of Education defines learning disability (Special Education Information Handbook, 1981) as:

A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication, and that is characterized by a condition that:

- a. is not primarily the result of
 - i. impairment of vision;
 - ii. impairment of hearing;
 - iii. physical handicap;
 - iv. mental retardation;
 - v. primary emotional disturbance; or
 - vi. cultural difference; and
- b. results in a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual ability, with defects in one or more of:
 - i. receptive language (i.e., listening, reading);
 - ii. language processing (i.e., thinking, conceptualizing, integrating);
 - iii. expressive language (i.e., talking, spelling writing);
 - iv. mathematical computations; and

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- c. may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as:
 - i. a perceptual handicap;
 - ii. a brain injury;
 - iii. minimal brain dysfunction;
 - iv. dyslexia; or
 - v. developmental aphasia.

2. IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

a. **General screening to identify students with learning disabilities**

Identification procedures for students suspected of having learning disabilities should be carried out in the student's language of instruction. Where a student's language is other than English or French, a reasonable delay in the language-based aspects of assessment should be considered.

The screening should consist of an early developmental review involving parents and local interdisciplinary services. procedures involved are outlined in Memoranda 1978-79:15 and 1979-80:24 on *Early identification of children's learning needs*.

No single characteristic is likely to be diagnostic of

learning disability. Since children develop at different rates and in different ways, care should be taken to ensure that developmental differences are not automatically seen as disabilities. Where, however, a child is exhibiting a number of characteristics normally associated with learning disabilities, further assessment should be considered.

b. Specific diagnostic procedures for students identified as having learning disabilities

A diagnostic evaluation for individual students should be based on some or all of the following:

- continuous educational assessment;
- detailed health assessment (hearing, vision, physical and neurological);
- psychological assessment;
- language assessment;
- social/family history;
- assessment of observed behaviours in a variety of settings.

Assessments may vary in complexity according to the

requirements of each pupil under consideration.

It is essential that all results of diagnostic procedure and their implications be discussed with the parent, student, and educators involved in the planning and implementation of the student's program. It is expected that communication and co-operation will have been established previously between the home and school. Families are a most influential force in the development of children and youth; without family involvement, opportunities for the progress of exceptional pupils are greatly reduced.

3. PROGRAMMING FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

The assessment results (learning styles, strengths, interests, needs, and socio-emotional development) will dictate the most effective program. It is of paramount importance that the findings or psychological, educational and medical reports be translated into instructional expectations and strategies to assist teachers to meet the needs of each student. With the assistance the resources available,

including information resulting from the diagnostic procedures, the school principal, in consultation with special education and student services personnel, has the responsibility of ensuring that an appropriate program will be implemented for each student. A cautionary note should be added here. Although assessment is the basis for program development it is good practice to hold assessment results as tentative. This should not inhibit program development but, rather, permit program adjustments and modifications to be made as new information becomes available.

In many cases, reinforcement of the program at home will be desirable and productive. School and board personnel should work closely with parents to ensure that a consistent and co-operative approach is developed and sustained.

Both elementary and secondary schools should have resource teachers available to assist learning disabled students. School boards should also make provision for assistants to work with individual students where necessary, and under the direction of the classroom teacher. Such assistance might be in the form of tutorial sessions on an individual or

small group basis supervised by teachers, classroom assistants, aides, or volunteers. School boards should ensure that classroom assistants have suitable skills and knowledge for the conduct of their assignments with learning disabled students.

Students with mild forms of learning disabilities can be served appropriately within the regular classroom. A special education consultant or resource teacher can provide the assistance required by the classroom teacher in the selection and organization of materials and instructional approaches suitable to the needs of these students.

Students with moderate forms of learning disabilities will probably require assistance outside of the regular classroom on a part-time basis. The assistance should be available for individual students or small groups for part of the day. A resource room teacher, itinerant special education teacher or classroom assistant should be assigned to schools, depending on the need in each community.

Students with severe forms of learning disabilities may require placement in a special education class for children with learning disabilities.

A learning-disabled pupil's level of intelligence, background of experience, stability of personality and home support may decrease or increase his/her ability to function in school. These factors must be considered when recommending placement. A student who has some severe learning disabilities but who also has a number of strengths may be able to handle a regular classroom with part-time assistance, whereas a less disabled student who has many accompanying needs may require full-time special class placement. The type of assistance required may change from year to year. A pupil retained in a regular classroom with support help may require a full-time special class placement at a later time in his educational program. Conversely, a student requiring full-time special class placement for one or two years may be able to cope a regular grade with part-time assistance at the end of that time. Some mildly disabled students may need part-time assistance for a period of time to develop strategies to help them cope adequately in a regular classroom.

The enrolment and the placement of students in such programs are to be in accordance with the terms of

Regulation 262 *Elementary and Secondary Schools and Schools for Trainable Retarded Pupils - General*, as amended by Ontario Regulation 617/81 and in accordance with the the guidelines in the *Special Education Information Handbook, 1981*.

School boards should provide professional support services to classroom personnel for ongoing assistance in individual student program development, evaluation and follow-up.

Liaison with the home, other involved professionals, and community agencies must be maintained to ensure integration of services and the effectiveness of the program.

The teaching methods used with a learning disabled student must be highly personalized and compatible with the student's strengths. It is important that the methodology be structured, sequential, and reinforced with relevant activities. Acceptance, commitment, and involvement on the part of pupil and parents are critical to the success of each student's program.

Programs must be reviewed regularly (Regulation 262).

Special instructional equipment should be provided where it will be of

assistance in the development of a successful program. It should be used to foster self-confidence and independence.

The education of children and youth with learning disabilities is the responsibility of school boards in Ontario. In the majority of circumstances, children with learning disabilities will be residing in their own homes. It is recognized, however, that there are a few exceptional cases where a pupil will have a clearly identifiable need for special non-education services; i.e. care or treatment. Some pupils may require residential services for such educational programs.

Admission to the majority of residential facilities in Ontario is determined selectively on the basis of assessed need for special non-educational services. That is, the child's educational requirements, per se, have no bearing on his or her eligibility for residential care.

Responsibility for seeking appropriate residential care facilities rests directly with the parents of each pupil. School boards are, however, expected to assist parents in locating the appropriate care or treatment service. Depending upon the nature the child's

requirements, this may be provided by a children's mental health centre, children's psychiatric service, children's aid society or other organizations offering appropriate service. It should be made clear to the parent that contact does not necessarily mean the child will be accepted into an approved residential program, but only that the agencies involved and the school board will work together with the family in clarifying the nature of the child's needs and assist in finding appropriate provision.

Collaboration between school boards and the Ministry of Community and Social Services and its funded agencies will be necessary to ensure that planning responds to the needs of individual children and families generally.

Information regarding care and treatment services may be obtained from the appropriate Children's Services area office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

4. MINISTRY RESOURCES FOR THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

a. Financial assistance

The annual General Legislative Grants Regulation provides

financial assistance to school boards for the provision of program and services at the elementary and secondary school levels. This includes programs and services for children with learning disabilities.

b. Professional development for teachers

The Ministry of Education Special Education courses permit a comprehensive program in learning disabilities during the three parts of the summer/winter courses. These courses provide for the preparation of teachers, consultants and supervisory personnel who have responsibility for the education of exceptional students. A component of pre-service teacher education programs focuses on special instructional approaches for exceptional students, including those with learning disabilities.

c. Curriculum development

The Ministry of Education has developed a support document entitled, *Children with Learning Disabilities* (Curriculum Ideas for

Teachers, 1980). This publication deals with classroom instructional approaches and techniques for teachers of students with learning disabilities.

d. Regional offices

The Ministry of Education, through its regional offices, will provide assistance to school boards in:

- i. the use of early identification processes;
- ii. their efforts to provide appropriate educational programs for students with learning disabilities; and,
- iii. evaluating the effectiveness, and need for further development, of resources, programs and services.

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