



SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN

SECTION 4: Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies

PHILOSOPHY

In Trillium Lakelands District School Board, every student is provided with multiple opportunities to achieve their full potential. TLDSB is committed to early identification and intervention when a student presents with learning concerns at any point throughout their educational career. The purpose of early and ongoing identification procedures is to ensure that education programs are tailored to student strengths and needs and improve student learning.

- Early identification and intervention procedures are a part of a continuous assessment and program planning process.
- This process should be initiated when a child is first enrolled in school or no later than the beginning of a program of studies immediately following Kindergarten and should continue throughout a child's school life.
- A team approach including teachers, the school intervention and/or student success team, parents/guardians and the student (where appropriate) is crucial in enabling teachers to establish high quality programming for every student.

TLDSB recognizes that although some students present with learning and/or special education needs as early as, or prior to, kindergarten, others may not present with learning and/or special education needs until later in their educational career. TLDSB believes that by implementing ongoing early identification and intervention procedures, we will be able to identify learning needs and provide effective and targeted interventions to close learning gaps.

THE PROCESS FOR EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENT LEARNING NEEDS

Classrooms teachers get to know their students by using a variety of diagnostic assessments. The information gleaned from these assessments is used by teachers to determine what students already know and can do in order to make decisions about the next steps for learning.

A common process is followed for all students regardless of their needs, exceptionality, or diagnosis:

- 1) The process begins in the classroom with the teacher conducting assessments to understand the student's learning needs. These assessments include, but are not limited to, direct observation of student learning, conversations with the student, analysis of work samples, tests, running records, etc.
- 2) If specific learning needs are identified from the classroom assessments, the teacher may work with the school intervention team (including the Special Education Resource Teacher / Department Head of Special Education) to develop a plan to respond to these needs. Actions at this stage may include:
 - a. Targeted instruction by the classroom teacher focused on closing the gap
 - b. Development of a student-specific Response to Intervention (RTI) plan. The RTI plan will include specific actions to be implemented and monitored for effectiveness.
 - c. Use of supplemental assessments to gather more information about the learning needs.
 - d. Supplemental instruction by a specialist teacher (ex. responsive reading support, responsive math support, etc.) to accelerate learning in the specified area of need. Decisions regarding the frequency, intensity and duration of supplemental instruction are based upon how severe the learning gap is.

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The planning of assessment and instruction for students who need additional support is an integrated and collaborative process. When chosen teaching accommodations, interventions and strategies have been applied for an adequate period of time, their effectiveness is reviewed in collaboration with members of the school team, who may provide further advice and recommendations.

Continued monitoring of students with special learning needs is expected throughout their school life. Classroom teachers and special education resource teachers / department heads of special education, under the direction of the principal, are responsible for ensuring student referrals are made to the school intervention or student success team when a student presents with academic, behavioural or emotional concerns.

Procedures for Notifying Parents about Learning Concerns

Ongoing communication between the school team and the parents/guardians is critical so that information is shared and efforts coordinated successfully on behalf of the student. This is especially true when information gleaned from classroom assessments indicate that a student is experiencing some learning challenges. TLDSB strives to foster open communication between home and school as early as possible in the early identification and intervention process, through some or all of the following methods:

- Phone call home to discuss classroom assessments / observations and next steps for programming;
- Invitation to observe in the classroom, where appropriate;
- Invitation to attend a parent meeting or case conference to share information between home and school;
- Phone call or letter home to communicate the goals and format of any supplemental programming that is available to the student;
- Provision of a written report (ex. the Responsive Reading Report) for students who are accessing supplemental supports for three weeks or more. This report is a communication tool which focuses on strengths, next steps and classroom/home connections.
- Formal reports of student progress towards goals are shared at designated reporting times (ex. Kindergarten Communication of Learning or Progress Report / Provincial Report Card)
- Invitation for parent/guardian to be involved in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) development process, where applicable.

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Role of the Classroom Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use information gleaned from diagnostic assessments to plan instruction and set appropriate learning goals for students; • Monitor student achievement through ongoing focused observations at the student desk and classroom level assessments; • Make referrals to the school intervention / Student Success team when students are not meeting grade expectations or demonstrating appropriate behavioural or social skills; • Collaborate with the special education resource teacher (SERT) or department head for special education to plan and facilitate targeted interventions; • Implement, monitor and provide feedback to school intervention/student success team on Response to Intervention (RTI) plan outcomes; • Maintain ongoing communication with the parent/guardian.
Role of the Special Education Resource Teacher / Department Head of Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in school intervention/student success team meetings; • Collaborate with the teacher to interpret and analyze information gleaned from classroom assessments in order to support program decisions; • Coordinate school level interventions, such as responsive reading or other types of small group support. Increase frequency, intensity and duration of school level interventions with programs targeting specific needs for students whose learning is not accelerating; • Liaise with Specialized Services Department Staff, as needed; • Make referrals to community partners, as needed, to support the student's learning; • Collaborate with the classroom teacher regarding parent conferences and communication
Role of the Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set direction for special education programs and services at the school level; • Establish regular School Intervention/Student Success Team meetings, ensuring the referral process to these teams is clearly understood by staff; • Establish early intervention as a school priority, evidenced in intentional scheduling/timetabling of interventions; • Ensure ongoing monitoring of student achievement and special education intervention occurs; • Ensure implementation of recommended actions in RTI plans for students with special education needs.
Role of the Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate at school by participating in meetings, opportunities for discussions, and parent-teacher events; • Work collaboratively with school and community partners to ensure all essential supports are accessed as required; • Notify the school of any changes in your child's medical or physical status and needs so the teacher may adjust or modify your child's programming; • Participate in two-way communication with home and school to ensure that everyone is reinforcing the same learning goals; • Provide learning opportunities in the home that complement the school program; • Understand and contribute to your child's IEP, where applicable

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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The primary purpose of early identification and intervention procedures in TLDSB is to improve student achievement and close learning gaps. It is essential that the school team monitors the ongoing effectiveness of the interventions to ensure the implemented actions are having the maximum positive impact on student learning.

Sometimes, a more intensive level of programming needs to be implemented. When a student requires specialized programs and interventions, the school team may determine that an Individual Education Plan (IEP) should be developed. The IEP is:

- A document to meet the student's needs:
- The IEP is a written plan that communicates the strengths and special education needs of the student.
- The most important educational goals for the student, as determined by classroom assessments and in consultation with the parent/guardian, are included in the IEP.
- It is a written commitment that records the learning expectations for the student and documents how the educators will meet the student's needs at school.
- A document that changes as the student develops:
- The IEP is a living document that is continually reviewed, updated and changed based upon the student's progress towards the learning goals and expectations within.

The school team will maintain open lines of communication between home and school. If learning concerns persist, a more specialized level of assessment may need to be considered.

PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERATION FOR SPECIALIZED ASSESSMENT

In complex situations where a student is not responding as expected to the programming or interventions determined by the school team, a referral will be made to the system intervention team. The system intervention team is a multi-disciplinary team from the TLDSB Department of Specialized Services consisting of:

- Special Education Consultant;
- Psycho-Educational Consultant;
- Speech Language Pathologist;
- Student Services / Attendance Counsellor.

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The system intervention team will support the school team to review the student's profile and have a discussion of strengths, needs and interventions implemented to date, including the frequency, intensity and duration of these interventions. The system intervention team may:

- Recommend new strategies or programming suggestions;
- Conduct an observation of the student;
- Offer consultative services for the school staff who are responsible for programming;
- Recommend a referral to a community agency, pending parent/guardian consent.

If more information is required to support next steps for programming, the team may recommend a specialized assessment.

Referral for Specialized Assessment

Referrals for specialized assessment are considered by the system intervention team, when the needs of a student are complex and the interventions implemented to date, through the early identification and response to intervention procedures, are not yielding the expected results.

- Prior to conducting a specialized assessment, it is recommended that any medical issues are evaluated and treated by the appropriate medical professional (ex. hearing, vision, etc.);
- During the system intervention team meeting, the school must present evidence of interventions attempted to date (ex. including frequency, intensity and duration), student work samples, IEP and RTI plans. Upon review of this information, the system team may have new suggestions of strategies or interventions which are requested to be implemented before undertaking a specialized assessment, such as a psycho-educational assessment or a speech and language assessment.

It is essential to recognize that specialized assessments are intensive, and they are only approved after we have exhausted all programming and intervention options at the school level and we determine that the interventions are not yielding the expected response. The number of specialized assessments that can be prioritized each year is limited, thus the Department of Specialized Services holds the responsibility to allocate these supports based on the needs of the system.

Written parent permission is required before any specialized assessments are administered.

PROCEDURES FOR IPRC CONSIDERATION AND REFERRAL TO IPRC

While the identification of a specific exceptionality or diagnosis may be helpful to provide additional information for the teacher, this is not necessary to gain access to special services or programs at school. It is very useful for the school to have access to reports and recommendations as a result of any exceptionalities or diagnoses from outside sources so that we can design the best program for the student. We welcome parents/guardians to share information with us.

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Types of Early Intervention Strategies Used Prior to Referral to IPRC

A number of programming strategies are used within the classroom and/or resource program prior to a student being referred to the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) and for students with special needs who do not meet IPRC criteria.

The following strategies are implemented as appropriate for individual students in TLDSB:

- Classroom interventions (ex. specific and targeted interventions in the classroom by the teacher);
- IEP development, including necessary accommodations, modifications to the curriculum and/or alternative programs;
- Research (ex. evidence-based strategies relevant to the need);
- Assistive technology (ex. technology used to support learning);
- Diagnostic and supplemental assessment and interpretation (ex. collecting more specific information to further understand the strengths and needs of the student);
- Programs (ex. strategies from a specific program, such as Applied Behaviour Analysis, Collaborative and Proactive Solutions, etc.);
- Resource Support (ex. specific and targeted interventions out of the classroom with support of the Special Education Resource Teacher, Itinerant Teacher or Department Head of Special Education);
- Development and monitoring of Response to Intervention (RTI) plans, developed by the school intervention team
- Department of Specialized Services Staff Support (ex. support from central level staff, such as consultants, psycho-educational consultants, speech and language pathologists, student services/attendance counselors)
- Community partnerships (ex. support from outside agencies, such as therapy, interventions, programming, medical reports, etc.)

Parent Notification of Referral to an IPRC

Parents are notified if a child is being considered for IPRC referral. This notification takes place through parent interviews, phone calls, and / or normal reporting and interview meetings. A written confirmation of date, time, and place for an IPRC meeting is sent to parents prior to an IPRC meeting taking place.

Parent Notification of Consideration for Special Education Programs or Services

Parent notification takes place if a student is being considered for special education programs or services. These services might include resource support, referral to the system intervention team, referral for specialized assessment, student services counsellor involvement or participation in a special education program.

This notification takes place through parent/guardian interviews or meetings, phone calls or other methods of home/school communication. In some situations, such as where a specialized assessment or student services counsellor involvement is being considered, there is an informed consent form which requires a parent/guardian signature.



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Additional References:

[Policy/Program Memorandum #11: Early Identification of Children's Learning Needs](#)

[Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools](#)

[Learning For All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12](#)