

SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN

SECTION 9: Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities

CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF EXCEPTIONALITIES

The board uses the Ministry of Education Categories and Definitions of exceptionality to identify students through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process. To assist with consistency in the identification process, TLDSB also uses additional [locally developed exceptionality criteria](#) for use by the IPRC. These guidelines include the characteristics of the student, assessment information required, and documentation required to support the particular exceptionality determination.

The following information outlines the Ministry of Education Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities.

BEHAVIOURAL

A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance, and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:

- difficulty with building and/or maintaining interpersonal relationships;
- excessive fears or anxieties;
- a tendency for compulsive reaction;
- an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof.

COMMUNICATIONAL

Autism

A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:

- a) disturbances in:
 - rate of educational development;
 - ability to relate to the environment;
 - mobility;
 - perception, speech and language;
- b) lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.

Speech Impairment

A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

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Language Impairment

A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, and which may:

- a) involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication; and
- b) include one or more of:
 - language delay;
 - dysfluency;
 - voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.

Learning Disability

One of a number of neurodevelopmental disorders that persistently and significantly has an impact on the ability to learn and use academic and other skills that:

- affect the ability to perceive or process verbal or non-verbal information in an effective and accurate manner in students who have assessed intellectual abilities that are *at least* in the average range;
- results in (a) academic underachievement that is inconsistent with the intellectual abilities of the student (which are at least in the average range), and/or (b) academic achievement that can be maintained by the student only with extremely high levels of effort and/or with additional support;
- results in difficulties in the development and use of skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, mathematics, work habits and learning skills;
- may typically be associated with difficulties in one or more cognitive processes, such as phonological processing; memory and attention; processing speed; perceptual-motor processing; visual-spatial processing; executive functions (e.g., self-regulation of behaviour and emotions, planning, organizing of thoughts and activities, prioritizing, decision making);
- may be associated with difficulties in social interaction (e.g., difficulty in understanding social norms, or the point of view of others); with various other conditions or disorders, diagnosed or undiagnosed; or with other exceptionalities;
- is not the result of a lack of acuity in hearing and/or vision that has not been corrected; intellectual disabilities; socio-economic factors; cultural differences; lack of proficiency in the language of instruction; lack of motivation or effort; gaps in school attendance or inadequate opportunity to benefit from instruction.

INTELLECTUAL

Giftedness

An advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.

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Mild Intellectual Disability

A learning disorder characterized by:

- an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and support services;
- a learning style that profits from a hands-on, concrete and applied approach;
- an individually-paced and practical approach to academic subjects;
- an expectation of successful independent living;
- a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, economic self-support and meaningful and significant contributions to family and society.

Developmental Disability

A severe learning disorder characterized by:

- an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate individualized intellectual development and learning;
- complex and multiple needs requiring modified and alternative programming;
- significant areas of need may include communication, basic living skills, social interaction and adjustment, impulse control and behaviour, and functional academics.

PHYSICAL

Physical Disability

A condition of physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations, to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or developmental level.

Blind and Low Vision

A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance.

MULTIPLE

Multiple Exceptionalities

A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities, that is of such nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.